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PERSONAL SCRIPTURE STUDY OF PROSPECTIVE MISSIONARIES

by

Eric L. Wing

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Religious Education

Brigham Young University

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## ABSTRACT

### PERSONAL SCRIPTURE STUDY OF PROSPECTIVE MISSIONARIES

Eric L. Wing

Religious Education

Master of Arts

The call of Church leaders to “raise the bar” placed direct attention on the preparation of future missionaries. Also, the new *Preach My Gospel* missionary guide emphasized effective personal scripture study in order for missionaries to fulfill their purposes of teaching by the Spirit and inviting others to come unto Christ. Thus, “raising the bar” and *Preach My Gospel* together created an important focus on the personal scripture study of prospective missionaries. However, available social research offered little indication of the state of scripture study among future missionaries.

Consequently, this study maintained an exploratory design and utilized qualitative research methods to discover the nature of personal scripture study among prospective missionaries. The aim of this study was to find descriptive data that would be useful to parents, trainers, leaders, and future researchers in helping prospective missionaries to improve their personal scripture study.

From February to April 2006, six respondents participated in repeated interviews and eleven others informed two focus groups. This study reported results and conclusions with rich description—involving ample use of evidence and quotations from the narrative data. Findings of this study include the following: They all knew scripture study was the right thing to do. None of them studied well while in high school. They all had improved their scripture study during the year prior to their mission. Their upcoming missions served as a prime motive for wanting to improve their scripture study. They all had experienced blessings from scripture study. Reading the scriptures out of obligation or for an extrinsic reward is less-effective scripture study. Particular methods and factors produced meaningful results. Primarily, this research found that personal agency, a structured routine, and knowledge of why and how to study the scriptures were vital to effective scripture study.

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# CONTENTS

## Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of Problem.....	1
Divine Authorship.....	4
The Role of the Holy Spirit.....	6
The Power of the Word.....	9
Effective Scripture Study.....	14
Summary.....	19
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	20
3. METHODOLOGY.....	27
Explanation of Qualitative Research.....	28
Description of Researchers.....	30
Credibility, Dependability, Confirmability, and Transferability....	31
Approvals.....	35
Recruitment and Description of Participants.....	36
Pilot Interviews.....	38
The Initial Interview.....	39
The Follow-up Interviews.....	42
The Focus Groups.....	44
President Hinckley’s Challenge.....	45
Data Analysis.....	46
Reporting Results and Findings.....	48
4. RESULTS.....	50
Interview Participants.....	51
Todd’s Story.....	52
Jeff’s Story.....	66
Brief Descriptions of Three Other Interview Participants.....	80
Focus Groups.....	84
Focus Group A.....	85
5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS.....	100
Conclusions.....	101
Implications.....	133

Appendix

A. IRB Approval Letter.....	138
B. CES Approval Letter.....	139
C. Recruitment Survey.....	140
D. Interview Consent Form.....	141
E. Focus Group Consent Form.....	142
F. Interview Guide for the First Interview.....	143
G. Interview Guide for the Second Interview.....	145
H. Interview Guide for the Third Interview.....	146
I. Interview Guide for the Focus Groups.....	147
J. Focus Group B Transcript.....	148
K. Categories and Terms for Units of Data.....	158
WORKS CITED.....	162

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Lord revealed to Hyrum Smith, “It is I that speak; behold I am the light which shineth in darkness, and by my power I give these words unto thee” (Doctrine and Covenants 11:11). Hyrum was apparently anxious to be called to preach, but was told to “wait a little longer” (11:16). Instead, God instructed him to “first seek to obtain my word” (11:21). Subsequently, this acquirement would lead to having the Lord’s Spirit and His word—“the power of God unto the convincing of men” (11:21). Furthermore, Hyrum received counsel to study both the Bible and the forthcoming Book of Mormon (see 11:22). This revelation teaches that both scripture and effective scripture study are prerequisites for successful missionary work.

#### Statement of Problem

A Latter-day Saint missionary’s purpose is to “represent Jesus Christ” in finding, teaching, and inviting people to “come unto Jesus Christ and become converted to His restored gospel.”<sup>1</sup> Personal scripture study has a direct impact on a missionary’s ability to fulfill this purpose. Individual gospel study is not only an established portion of a missionary’s daily schedule, but it is also designed “to strengthen [the missionary’s] knowledge and testimony and help [the missionary] prepare to meet the needs of those

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<sup>1</sup> *Preach My Gospel* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 2, 6, 10; hereafter cited as *Preach My Gospel*.

[he or she] teach[es].”<sup>2</sup> The *Preach My Gospel* missionary guide emphasizes personal scripture study and the need to do it effectively. This manual explains, “It is more important for [missionaries] to have meaningful learning experiences on [their] own” than through structured programs.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, the individual aspect of gospel study is fundamental to valuable missionary service.

*Preach My Gospel* also states, “Many missionaries struggle to know how to study effectively.”<sup>4</sup> Additionally, research suggests that personal scripture study is neither frequent nor meaningful among most Latter-day Saints.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Elder Henry B. Eyring instructed religious educators about the need for effective prayer and scripture study among their students. He said, “If you can learn more of what they are doing, you will find that they are not doing it the way that works.”<sup>6</sup> The aim of this study is to do precisely as Elder Eyring counseled: “learn more of what they are doing”—specifically, how prospective missionaries personally study the scriptures. This research investigates the needed factors of desire and action regarding scripture study.<sup>7</sup> Specific research about missionaries’ background with the scriptures prior to entering the MTC, including their study habits and the quality of their studies, will provide a more complete understanding necessary in helping them study effectively.

This research is most valuable among the pre-mission population because the basic concept behind “raising the bar” deals with what is taking place *before* the Missionary Training Center (hereafter referred to as MTC). Over three years ago, Elder

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<sup>2</sup> *Preach My Gospel*, viii.

<sup>3</sup> *Preach My Gospel*, 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Preach My Gospel*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 2, “Review of Literature,” for an explanation on LDS scripture study habits.

<sup>6</sup> Henry B. Eyring, “‘And Thus We See’: Helping a Student in a Moment of Doubt,” in *Charge to Religious Educators*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1994), 109.

<sup>7</sup> *Preach My Gospel* notes, “Successful gospel study requires desire and action” (18).

M. Russell Ballard announced, “The bar that is the standard for missionary service is being raised.” However, the vast majority of his talk was not directed to current missionaries. He declared, “Tonight we call upon you, our young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, to rise up, to measure up, and to be fully prepared to serve the Lord.”<sup>8</sup> President Gordon B. Hinckley stated, “The message to raise the bar on missionary qualifications was...a call for parents and leaders to work with young men earlier to better prepare them for missionary service and to keep them worthy of such service.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, considerable attention must be focused on future missionaries in order to assist in “raising the bar.”

Scholarly research can support this effort. With certain features of mission preparation, scholarly research can, at least, make some worthwhile evaluations to determine the current status of prospective missionaries. Research can also offer informed suggestions for improvement. Furthermore, this study can assist future studies and increase the base of knowledge and understanding for a vital part of mission preparation.

In summary, effective missionary service cannot happen without effective personal scripture study, and “raising the bar” is primarily directed at what is happening prior to the MTC. So, this study will assess prospective missionaries’ attitudes and practices regarding personal scripture study. When this information is discovered and reported, those called to prepare and train missionaries will be better equipped to lift future missionaries to the expected standard. Additionally, researchers (quantitative, qualitative, or historical) will have descriptive data to inform their studies.

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<sup>8</sup> M. Russell Ballard, “The Greatest Generation of Missionaries,” *Ensign*, November 2002, 48.

<sup>9</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, “To the Bishops of the Church,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, 19 June 2004, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 27.

The subject of scripture is both broad and deep and extends far beyond the scope of this research. Consequently, the remainder of this chapter briefly addresses fundamental truths regarding scripture and effective study of it. First, these foundational points express the sacred nature of scripture and its role in gospel living; and thereby, offer a basis for the importance of this topic of research. Second, this information defines scripture and outlines the basic elements of “effective scripture study,” which is a term commonly referred to throughout this research. Third, this material shows how effective scripture study prepares future missionaries for their labor.

### Divine Authorship

Scripture is literally defined as a writing, but is more commonly known as sacred writing. Basically, scripture is communication from God to His children, which are “words, both written and spoken, by holy men of God when moved upon by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>10</sup> Generally, Latter-day Saints refer to the scriptures as a specific collection of sacred writings that have been canonized, or recognized as “the standard works.”

God is the source of all scripture. The Lord declared, “These words are not of men nor of man, but of me” (Doctrine and Covenants 18:34). Speaking of the Book of Mormon, President Ezra Taft Benson said, “God is the author of the book.”<sup>11</sup> The Apostle Paul explained, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). Recognizing the sacredness of scripture begins with an acknowledgement of its divine

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<sup>10</sup> *The Scriptures*, CD-ROM Standard Edition 1.0 (Salt Lake City, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), Study Aids: scriptures. Also, President Wilford Woodruff defined the scriptures as “the words of God to man.” See Wilford Woodruff, *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 47.

<sup>11</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon is the Word of God,” *Ensign*, January 1988, 3.

origin. Accordingly, Alma the younger referred to scripture as “holy writ” (Alma 37:5). Thus, words of scripture stand apart from any other writing.

From the first man on the earth, God has revealed His word and commanded that His word be preserved and used (see Moses 6:4–6, 8). Enoch also possessed scripture and imparted the words of God to the people (see 6:45–47). Noah received the word of the Lord and taught the “Gospel unto the children of men, even as it was given unto Enoch” (8:19). Abraham obtained written words of God and recorded additional scripture (see Abraham 1:28, 31). Moses obtained the word of the Lord “written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18; see also 34:1 and Deuteronomy 10:2). Saints in Christ’s day utilized Old Testament writings and many inspired individuals provided added witnesses of the Savior and His gospel. Joseph Smith brought forth the Book of Mormon, established the Doctrine and Covenants, and produced the Pearl of Great Price. Thus, God has provided scriptures to mankind in all dispensations of time.

The scriptures are God’s voice. Elder David A. Bednar commented, “The scriptures, in essence, are a written ‘recording’ of the voice of the Lord.”<sup>12</sup> Sister Cheryl C. Lant taught, “When we read the scriptures we are hearing the voice of the Savior. He is not absent from our lives. He is actively positioned in the verses of these holy books.”<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, Elder Neal A. Maxwell noted the following:

In the revelations, the Lord speaks of how the voice of His spirit will be felt in our minds. He also says that if we read His words—meaning the scriptures—we will hear His voice. Many disciples have had private moments of pondering and reading the scriptures when the words came through in a clear, clarion way. We know Who it is who’s speaking to us! We’ve all had the experience of going over a scripture many times

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<sup>12</sup> David A. Bednar, “Because We Have Them Before Our Eyes,” *New Era*, April 2006, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Cheryl C. Lant, “My Soul Delighteth in the Scriptures,” *Ensign*, November 2005, 77.

without having it register. Then, all of a sudden, we're ready to receive it!  
We hear the voice of the Lord through His words.<sup>14</sup>

Familiarity with scripture leads to an acquaintance with God's voice (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:52). Thus, through scripture study, children of God not only learn of Him but also communicate with Him. This dialogue with Deity comes by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### The Role of the Holy Spirit

The sacred words of scripture come to man through prophets by means of the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup> Hence, many individuals refer to the scriptures as "the revelations" (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:35). Nephi said, "By the Spirit are all things made known unto the prophets" (1 Nephi 22:2). The Lord stated, "It is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:35). Inspired prophets reveal the words of God as they are "moved upon by the Holy Ghost" (Doctrine and Covenants 68:4, see also 2 Peter 1:21). Certainly, scripture would not exist without revelation.

Also, understanding scripture necessitates the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup> Elder Russell M. Nelson explained, "Truth given by revelation can only be understood by revelation."<sup>17</sup> In other words, to interpret scripture one must receive the same Spirit that gave the scripture. Elder Bednar explained, "As we study the content and feel the spirit of the written word of God, we learn to hear His voice in the words we read."<sup>18</sup> The Holy Ghost, therefore, converts reading into hearing (see 2 Nephi 32:2-5). For example,

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<sup>14</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, "Becoming a Disciple," *Ensign*, June 1996, 19.

<sup>15</sup> See Bruce R. McConkie, "Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah," *Ensign*, Oct. 1973, 83.

<sup>16</sup> See McConkie, "Ten Keys," 83.

<sup>17</sup> Russell M. Nelson, "Living by Scriptural Guidance," *Ensign*, November 2000, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Bednar, "Before Our Eyes," 5.

following baptism the Prophet Joseph Smith recounted the effect of the Holy Spirit when he said, “Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed to us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of” (Joseph Smith-History 1:74). Revelation is imperative for scriptural interpretation. Without such revelatory influence, scriptural pages would display words but not reveal the Word. A scripture reader who is void of the Spirit would turn pages without turning to the Lord, and would handle books without holding to the iron rod.

Additionally, the Holy Ghost testifies of scripture (see Moroni 10:4-5). This divine communication comes in response to faithful and sincere prayer, which President Benson called “the best test for determining...truthfulness.”<sup>19</sup> Revelation offers a sure and unmistakable witness of truth. Any other method to corroborate scripture is drastically inferior because it lacks the connection and power of God. The Prophet Joseph Smith gave the following instruction:

Search the scriptures—search the revelations...and ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to His glory nothing doubting, He will answer you by the power of His Holy Spirit. You will then know for yourselves and...will not then be dependent on man for the knowledge of God; nor will there be any room for speculation.... For when men receive their instruction from Him that made them, they know how He will save them.... Again we say: Search the Scriptures, search the Prophets and learn what portion of them belongs to you.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, as already mentioned, scriptural comprehension relies on spiritual assistance. Thus, a reader isolated from the Spirit could draw no benefit from scripture.

Therefore, seeking archeological or scientific evidence to prove the authenticity of

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<sup>19</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, “A New Witness for Christ,” *Ensign*, November 1984, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 11–12.

scripture is of little value (see John 6:63).<sup>21</sup> Likewise, contentious arguments over scripture are fruitless pursuits because debates of this nature are void of the Spirit of God (see 3 Nephi 11:29).<sup>22</sup> The corroborating evidence of scripture is found within the text itself and comes by a manifestation of the Holy Ghost. As the Savior explained to Peter, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17). Thus, testimonies of truth come from God by the Holy Spirit (see Alma 5:45-47). When received, a spiritual witness provides the foundation for continued effective scripture study, which seeks the necessary guidance of the Holy Spirit. Without this direction, scripture study would not edify.<sup>23</sup>

So, scripture is given, interpreted, and best verified by the power of the Holy Ghost. Paul taught, “The things of God knoweth no man, except he has the Spirit of God” (JST, 1 Corinthians 2:11). In fact, those who resist the Spirit view the scriptures as “foolishness” (2:14) and “esteem them as things of naught” (2 Nephi 33:2). Apparently, an individual’s openness to the Spirit determines his or her valuation of scripture.

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<sup>21</sup> See also Dallin H. Oaks, *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scripture*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001), 237-248.

<sup>22</sup> See also Dallin H. Oaks, “Alternate Voices,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 29-30.

<sup>23</sup> The concept that the scriptures are God’s voice is not the same as the notion that the scriptures are inerrant. Certainly, the manner of obtaining scriptures involves the work of mortal men, and in some cases, uninspired mortal men. Clearly, errors exist with the Bible. Also, Moroni addresses this issue with regards to the Book of Mormon (see Mormon 8:17, 9:31). Yet, even if men perfectly transmitted the messages of God, the words still would not be perfect. Brigham Young explained, “I do not believe that there is a single revelation...that is perfect in its fullness.... It is impossible for the poor, weak, low, grovelling, sinful inhabitants of the earth to receive a revelation from the Almighty in all its perfections. He has to speak to us in a manner to meet the extent of our capacities.... If an angel should come into this congregation, or visit any individual of it, and use the language he uses in heaven, what would we be benefitted? Not any, because we could not understand a word he said.... [Angels] have to descend to our capacities in order to communicate with us” (*Journal of Discourses*, 2:314). Therefore, scripture is not perfect. However, scripture originates with God, and if studied and applied with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the result and benefit will infallibly lead to Christ, who is perfect. The messages of scripture rise higher than the temporal language they are clothed in. This understanding describes yet another reason to invite and involve the Holy Spirit into scripture study.

Clearly, the Holy Ghost is essential to receive the power and fulfill the purposes of scripture study.

In review, God writes scripture and provides these sacred messages by revelation. Also, the Holy Ghost allows for a confirmation and an understanding of scripture. These two truths explain the *what* and the *how* of teaching the gospel in any setting, including, of course, missionary work. These doctrines also offer a framework for the purposes and procedures of effective study scripture. The following objectives and actions of effective scripture study correlate with the stated purposes of a missionary, which entail teaching and testifying of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and inviting others “to live by His teachings.”<sup>24</sup>

### The Power of the Word

Scripture study has multiple purposes, all of which are housed in the principle of revelation and the process of coming unto Christ. These interrelated features of scripture study are illustrated by the following roles: testifying, teaching, preparing, blessing, empowering, revealing, and communing.

Testifying. The scriptures testify of Christ (see John 5:39). The scriptures provide recorded witnesses of Christ and invite readers to receive testimonies of the Savior through personal revelation. Paul recorded, “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Corinthians 12:3). Scripture naturally facilitates this manifestation of the Spirit. The title page of the Book of Mormon declares its purpose is to convince “Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God.” Both Nephi and Jacob plainly

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<sup>24</sup> *Preach My Gospel*, 6.

stated this motive for writing scripture (see 2 Nephi 25:26; Jacob 4:4). Testimonies are gained and maintained through scripture study (see Mosiah 1:5).

Teaching. Closely associated with testifying of Christ, the scriptures also teach the things of God (see Doctrine and Covenants 33:16). Thereby, scripture study leads to greater faith in the Savior (see Jacob 4:6, Moroni 7:25). Elder Bednar summarized, “One of the best ways to draw near unto Him and to both learn about and become more like the Lord Jesus Christ is to consistently study the holy scriptures.”<sup>25</sup> The scriptures contain necessary instruction and knowledge regarding God and His plan (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:17-36). Also, Jacob warned, “No man knoweth of [God’s] ways save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God” (Jacob 4:8). Thus, gospel education requires the companionship of the Spirit (see Doctrine and Covenants 50:14, 17-23).

Preparing. God provides scriptural “prophecies and promises” to prepare mankind for the coming of the Savior (see Doctrine and Covenants 1:17-18, 37). Indeed, scripture is the instrument for gathering Israel.<sup>26</sup> Scripture warns and prepares the inhabitants of the world for the judgments of God. Furthermore, God will hold mankind accountable for their use of His word (see 3 Nephi 27:26; Doctrine and Covenants 20:13-16). Alma warned, “The scriptures are before you; if you will wrest them it shall be to your own destruction” (Alma 13:20). Evidently, the scriptures provide preparation for coming judgments—both worldwide and personal.

Blessing. Effective scripture study produces rich blessings. When scripture is approached in a manner conducive to the Spirit, then the power of the word can teach

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<sup>25</sup> Bednar, “Before Our Eyes,” 4.

<sup>26</sup> See Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 85.

(see 2 Timothy 3:15-16), lead (see Psalm 119:105), guide (see Helaman 3:29), inspire (see Alma 31:5), comfort (2 Timothy 2:15), heal (see Jacob 2:8), protect (see 1 Nephi 15:24), reveal (see 2 Nephi 32:3), sanctify (see John 15:3), and empower (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:4). Indeed, proper treatment of scripture unlocks its power and unveils its authenticity. However, time with the scriptures that is absent of the Spirit yields none of these benefits.

Empowering. Also, due to their sacred nature, the words of scripture have inherent power. Elder Richard G. Scott stated, “There is a power that can change lives in the specific words recorded in the standard works. That power is weakened when we paraphrase or alter the actual wording.”<sup>27</sup> He also explained, “When scriptures are used as the Lord has caused them to be recorded, they have intrinsic power that is not communicated when paraphrased.”<sup>28</sup> The “powerful effect” of scripture caused Alma to “try the virtue of the word of God” (Alma 31:5). Speaking of the Book of Mormon, President Benson described the power of effective scripture study with the following counsel:

It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that. It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called “the words of life” (D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Richard G. Scott, “Four Fundamentals for Those Who Teach and Inspire Youth,” *Old Testament Symposium Speeches*, (Provo, UT: Church Educational System, 1987), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Richard G. Scott, “He Lives,” *Ensign*, November 1999, 87-88.

<sup>29</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon—The Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, November 1986, 7.

Thus, reading scripture conveys power—power necessary to successfully negotiate through mortality (see Helaman 3:29-30; Alma 37:44-46).

Revealing. The body of scripture is an instrument of revelation similar to physical objects of revelation, such as the Liahona and the Urim and Thummim. Alma drew this relationship for his son, Helaman. He instructed, “It is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ...as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass” (Alma 37:44). Also, Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated, “We do not overstate the point when we say that the scriptures can be a Urim and Thummin to assist each of us to receive personal revelation.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the scriptures are physical means for obtaining revelation. Lehi was “filled with the Spirit of the Lord” as he read the words of God (see 1 Nephi 1:12). Elder Bruce R. McConkie instructed, “I sometimes think that one of the best-kept secrets of the kingdom is that the scriptures open the door to the receipt of revelation.”<sup>31</sup> Children of God can receive knowledge and personal direction directly from their Father in and through their scripture study. Sister Sheri L. Dew remarked, “Some of the clearest promptings I have ever received have come while being immersed in the scriptures. They are a conduit for revelation. They teach us the language of the Spirit.”<sup>32</sup> Elder Oaks added, “The scriptures are not the ultimate source of knowledge, but what precedes the ultimate source.”<sup>33</sup> Scripture study invites revelation. Also, Elder Bednar noted that the majority of revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants came as a direct result of Joseph Smith’s work in translating the Bible and the Book of Mormon.<sup>34</sup> This example shows

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<sup>30</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, “Scripture Reading and Revelation,” *Ensign*, January 1995, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrines of the Restoration*, ed. Mark L. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 243.

<sup>32</sup> Sheri L. Dew, “We Are Not Alone,” *Ensign*, November 1998, 96.

<sup>33</sup> Oaks, “Scripture Reading,” 7.

<sup>34</sup> David A. Bednar, “Understanding the Importance of Scripture Study,” Rick’s College devotional address, 6 January 1998, [http://www.byui.edu/presentations/transcript/devotionals/1998\\_01\\_06\\_bednar](http://www.byui.edu/presentations/transcript/devotionals/1998_01_06_bednar).

that faithful time and effort in the scriptures leads to more revelation. Thus, revelation is both a requirement and a reward for effective scripture study.

Communing. Interrelated with the revealing properties of scripture, time with God's word creates opportunity to commune with Him. The scriptures are the will, mind, word, voice, and power of God (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:4). Inevitably, greater scriptural understanding—which only comes with the aid of the Spirit—leads to greater comprehension of the Lord. Elder Eyring stated, “The Savior gave us the scriptures, paid for by prophets at a price we cannot measure, so that we could know Him.”<sup>35</sup> Familiarity with scripture causes familiarity with God. This occasion for closeness to Deity coincides with God's invitation to “draw near unto [Him]” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:63).

President Spencer W. Kimball said, “I find that when I get casual in my relationships with divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice is speaking, that I am far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures the distance narrows and the spirituality returns.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, effective scripture study enhances one's ability to become like God. President Howard W. Hunter explained, “Scriptures contain the record of the self-revelation of God, and through them God speaks to man. Where could there be more profitable use of time than reading from the scriptural library the literature that teaches us to know God and understand our relationship to him?”<sup>37</sup> This child-Father interaction expresses the ultimate treasure of scripture study.

The preceding points highlight revelation from God and conversion to God as foundational purposes of scripture study. In other words, the Lord teaches about Himself

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<sup>35</sup> Henry B. Eyring, “Always,” *Ensign*, October 1999, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*. ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 135.

<sup>37</sup> Howard W. Hunter, “Reading the Scriptures,” *Ensign*, November 1979, 64.

and invites all to “come unto [Him]” (Matthew 11:28) through the scriptures. Therefore, one’s relationship with the Lord appears to fittingly coincide with his or her relationship with the Word.<sup>38</sup> This connection places profound importance on how one approaches scripture study.

### Effective Scripture Study

Multiple authors and teachers suggest various ways to benefit more from scripture study. Most of these recommendations have merit. However, as established earlier, no method is effective without the aid of the Holy Ghost. Efficacious procedures of scripture study naturally flow with its sacred purposes. Also, appropriate methods of scripture study can vary according to capacity, circumstance, and style of the individual.

Therefore, the following material emphasizes true principles over particular techniques. Naturally, these principles relate to the previously stated purposes of scripture study regarding revelation and conversion.

Revelation by the Holy Spirit is essential for effective scripture study. Consequently, prayer is vital for scriptural edification. Therefore, meaningful study of the scriptures utilizes identical methods for seeking revelation. These techniques include desire, humility, belief, work, patience, reverence, and obedience. If scripture study does not invite the Spirit, then it is rendered ineffective.

In fact, just as revelation cannot be forced or rushed, neither can the study of the word of God.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, God does not force revelation upon the unwilling. God speaks according to the willingness and readiness of the individual. Elder McConkie explained,

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<sup>38</sup> See Vern D. Sommerfeldt, *Coming Unto Christ by Making the Book of Mormon the Keystone of our Lives* (unpublished book), 79a.

<sup>39</sup> See Boyd K. Packer, “Reverence Invites Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21.

“Each pronouncement in the holy scriptures...is so written as to reveal little or much, depending on the spiritual capacity of the student.”<sup>40</sup> Alma also taught, “He that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word” (Alma 12:10).

Apparently, the treatment of scripture study determines its results. Elder Oaks explained, “What we get from a book—especially a sacred text—is mostly dependent on what we take to its reading—in desire and readiness to learn, and in attunement to the light communicated by the Spirit of the Lord.”<sup>41</sup> Therefore, preparation and attitude are critical factors for receiving revelation through scripture study.

Part of this preparation is the acceptance of previous revelation. Elder Nelson stated, “You cultivate such revelatory experiences by living according to the light already given you.”<sup>42</sup> Conversely, rejecting revelation closes past, present, and future revelations. Obedience is, therefore, an imperative part of effective scripture study (see Doctrine and Covenants 50:35). Joseph Smith taught the following:

We take the sacred writings into our hands, and admit that they were given by direct inspiration for the good of man. We believe that God condescended to speak from the heavens and declare His will concerning the human family, to give them just and holy laws, to regulate their conduct, and guide them in a direct way, that in due time He might take them to Himself, and make them joint heirs with His Son. But when this fact is admitted, that the immediate will of heaven is contained in the Scriptures, are we not bound as rational creatures to live in accordance to all its precepts? Will the mere admission, that this is the will of heaven ever benefit us if we do not comply with all its teachings? Do we not offer violence to the Supreme Intelligence of heaven, when we admit the truth of its teachings, and do not obey them? Do we not descend below our own knowledge, and the better wisdom which heaven has endowed us with, by such a course of conduct? For these reasons, if we have direct revelations given us from heaven, surely those revelations were never

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<sup>40</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 71.

<sup>41</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, “All Men Everywhere,” *Ensign*, May 2006, 77.

<sup>42</sup> Nelson, “Scriptural Guidance,” 18.

given to be trifled with, without the trifler's incurring displeasure and vengeance upon his own head, if there is any justice in heaven; and that there is must be admitted by every individual who admits the truth and force of God's teachings, His blessings and cursings, as contained in the sacred volume.<sup>43</sup>

Hence, a softened, believing heart is necessary to receive and understand scripture (see Mosiah 26:3; Alma 33:20). Unlocking the revelations within scripture and receiving revelations through the act of scripture study requires “the heart and a willing mind” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:34). Thus, the opening of one’s heart precedes the opening of revelations, in both number and content.

Therefore, meaningful scripture study implies “a sincere heart” (Moroni 10:4). Accordingly, the scriptures repeatedly identify the “heart” as a key component of scripture study. For example, Alma taught that the word must be planted in the heart in order for it to grow and produce fruit (see Alma 32:28-43). Also, Paul instructed members to write gospel truth on the heart (see 2 Corinthians 3:3). Ezra “prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10). The scriptures further teach that individuals must have the word *in* them (see Alma 12:13; John 15:7; 2 Nephi 33:2; Doctrine and Covenants 88:66). Elder Nelson explained, “When we feast upon the words of Christ...they become an integral part of our nature.”<sup>44</sup> Indeed, scripture study becomes personal through sincerity, likening, and obedience. And the more personal the study, the more scripture improves character and converts to Christ. Thus, genuine application of the scriptures leads to learning of Him and becoming more like Him. He and His word seem to enter the heart together (see John 15:1-8).

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<sup>43</sup> Smith, *Teachings*, 54.

<sup>44</sup> Nelson, “Scriptural Guidance,” 17.

Scripture study can connect and unite individuals to God. Consequently, effective scripture study is more like an intimate conversation than a detached reading. President Gordon B. Hinckley said reading the scriptures should “become a love affair with the word of God.”<sup>45</sup> An impersonal or casual perusal does not coincide with the nature of scripture. President Joseph F. Smith taught, “Our attitude...toward the scriptures should be in harmony with the purposes for which they were written. They are intended to enlarge man’s spiritual endowments and to reveal and intensify the bond of relationship between him and his God.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, rather than the terms *reading* or *studying*, *feeling* or *experiencing* appear to more accurately describe ideal time with the scriptures. This manner of scripture study is personal and sincere. The Holy Ghost enables this relevancy of scripture and inspires personal application (see 1 Nephi 19:23; 2 Nephi 32:3). Hence, the word of God is “quick,” or living (see Hebrew 4:12).

Revelation and conversion are the prime products of effective scripture study. Essentially, the effectiveness of scripture study is defined by its openness to the Holy Spirit, which allows for both communication with God as well as instruction, inspiration, and empowerment to become like Him. Neither of these effects occurs without a desire for them. Therefore, effective scripture study rests on the principle of, “Ask, and ye shall receive” (see Matthew 7:7; Moroni 7:26; Doctrine and Covenants 4:7, 42:61).

The scriptures, therefore, appear to work for an individual just as the Liahona worked for Lehi’s group. Nephi said the Liahona operated by faith, diligence, and heed (see 1 Nephi 16:28). So, unbelief, slothfulness, and disobedience deny access to the power of the word. These forms of rebellion were present with many of the Israelites

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<sup>45</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Light Within You,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 99.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*, comp. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 45.

when bitten by the fiery, flying serpents. By instruction from the Lord, Moses constructed a serpent on a staff for the purpose of healing the people. However, many “would not look...because they did not believe that it would heal them” (Alma 33:20). Additionally, Peter learned this lesson about faithfully and consistently looking to the Lord. He walked out to the Lord upon the waters, “But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me” (Matthew 14:30). Jesus “immediately” saved him with the rebuke, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (14:31). Peter had failed to keep his eyes on the Savior.

Looking to scripture today appears to be as the Liahona, the serpent on the staff, and Christ on the water were then. The results in these three illustrations were guidance, healing, and salvation. These identical benefits are available through effective scripture study. As Alma noted, “Do not be slothful because of the easiness of the way; for so was it with our fathers; for so was it prepared for them, that if they would look they might live; even so it is with us” (Alma 37:46). He, therefore, concluded, “Take care of these sacred things” (37:47). One looks to Christ by faithfully, diligently, and obediently looking to the scriptures.

Finally, Joseph Smith concluded the following regarding scripture study:

It is unnecessary to say anything respecting these works [the scriptures]; those who have read them, and who have drunk of the stream of knowledge which they convey, know how to appreciate them; and although fools may have them in derision, yet they are calculated to make men wise unto salvation, and sweep away the cobwebs of superstition of ages, throw a light on the proceedings of Jehovah which have already been accomplished, and mark out the future in all its dreadful and glorious realities. Those who have tasted the benefit derived from a study of those works, will undoubtedly vie with each other in their zeal for

sending them abroad throughout the world, that every son of Adam may enjoy the same privileges, and rejoice in the same truths.<sup>47</sup>

One who effectively studies the scriptures recognizes their value, knows how to properly treat them, and desires to proclaim them to others. Thus, meaningful scripture study produces knowledge of truth and motivates missionary activity.

### Summary

The preceding material expresses the magnitude of the topic of scripture. It also describes purposes and behaviors of “effective scripture study,” and thereby, provides meaning to this expression. Furthermore, this information shows the importance of scripture study for missionary preparation. Effective scripture study naturally supports the duties of a missionary to teach by the Spirit and invite others to be converted to the restored gospel.

Scripture study is eternally significant and deeply personal. This sacred act involves searching in the soul as much as in books. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is essential to effective scripture study, which leads to revelation and conversion. These two results are necessary for successful missionary work. Due to the focus on raising the bar, these results are also necessary *before* missionary work.

Therefore, this study centers on the personal scripture study of prospective missionaries. As previously noted, effective scripture study is inherently personal and involves the Holy Spirit. Consequently, this research explores these issues through qualitative research methods. This type of study allows for in-depth investigation and produces detailed, descriptive data.

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<sup>47</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4:187.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Personal scripture study is foundational to learning, living, and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet, in spite of its fundamental nature, a minimal amount of published research offers limited perspective regarding actual study habits in the LDS community, especially among prospective missionaries. However, these studies provide valuable direction for researching personal scripture study.

Some research has addressed adult study habits. Randy Bott conducted a study about the retention of gospel learning. Among many valuable findings, his research uncovered that particular methods improved the effectiveness of personal scripture study, but most participants in his study said they were unwilling to permanently incorporate these methods into their “hectic, busy, daily schedules.” Bott reported, “Those interviewed believe that Church members would rather live with the guilt feelings resulting from not reading scriptures regularly than to make the sacrifices necessary to comply.”<sup>1</sup> If this attitude is also true of prospective missionaries today, then an obvious problem exists in training for missionary service.

Furthermore, frequency of scripture study among Latter-day Saints appears to be minimal. In a study of returned missionaries, Richard McClendon and Bruce Chadwick

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<sup>1</sup> Randy L. Bott, “A Comparison of Gain Scores and Retention Rates of Four Selected Learning Strategies” (Ph.D. diss., BYU, 1988), 99.

found that only 16 percent held personal, daily scripture study.<sup>2</sup> Bott's study found that 20 percent of participants read the scriptures personally everyday.<sup>3</sup> These levels of frequency are not only low, but also consistent with the findings of studies done on youth. Mark Peterson conducted research on seminary students in a rural community of the Rocky Mountains. He reported that 17 percent read daily during the school year previous to this study's intervention.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, from research done on seminary students at Provo High School, Timothy Bothell discovered students read the *Book of Mormon* personally only one to two times per week.<sup>5</sup>

Additional findings about LDS youth illustrate the need for frequent, personal scripture study. In a thorough study on delinquent behavior of LDS youth, Brent Top and Bruce Chadwick found, "the more frequent the private religious behavior, such as scripture reading, personal prayers, and fasting, the lower the level of delinquency."<sup>6</sup> Since the stated need is for "worthy, qualified, spiritually energized missionaries," then this research indicates the frequency of personal scripture study plays a significant role in successful missionary preparation.<sup>7</sup> Also, John Harding concluded from his longitudinal study of LDS young men that successfully encouraging religious experience, "could be enhanced by promoting it through encounters with sacred text."<sup>8</sup> Elder Ballard has counseled prospective missionaries to prepare themselves by "giving the Lord more of

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<sup>2</sup> Richard McClendon and Bruce Chadwick, "Latter-day Saint Returned Missionaries in the United States: A Survey on Religious Activity and Postmission Adjustment," *BYU Studies* [2004], Vol. 43, No. 2, 138. In this study, another 32% reported they read the scriptures "a few times a week."

<sup>3</sup> Bott, "Four Selected Learning Strategies," 49.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Peterson, "Increasing Scripture Reading in a Religious Education Setting Through Cooperative Efforts of Parents, Church Leaders, and Teachers" (Ed.D., Nova Southeastern University, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Bothell, "Exact Replacement Scoring Versus Semantically Acceptable Scoring of Cloze Passages as a Basis for Classifying Students into Reading Ability Levels," (Ph.D. Diss., BYU, 1998), 50,73.

<sup>6</sup> Brent Top and Bruce Chadwick, "The Power of the Word: Religion, Family, Friends, and Delinquent Behavior of LDS Youth," *BYU Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 305.

<sup>7</sup> Ballard, "Greatest Generation," 47.

<sup>8</sup> John R. Harding, "Sacred Text and Religious Experience" (Ph.D. diss., BYU, 1996), 83.

(their) time by studying the scriptures.”<sup>9</sup> Certainly, the amount of time prospective missionaries spend with the scriptures is a critical detail of effective study and a strong indicator of appropriate mission preparation.

In addition to the frequency of scripture reading, the quality of the study experience is also a concern for investigating effective scripture study. Dustin West concluded from his study of junior high school students that there was not a significant correlation between frequency of scripture study and enjoyment of scripture study.<sup>10</sup> He did, however, find that reading comprehension related directly to reading enjoyment. Bothell’s study indicated that prior experience with scriptural texts correlates with comprehension of the Book of Mormon.<sup>11</sup> Bothell advised teachers of youth to assess and address the reading abilities of their students in order to strengthen the quality of their scripture study.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, this educational concern plays a role in the quality of scripture study.

Similarly, West recommended more time should be spent teaching students *how* to understand scripture reading.<sup>13</sup> This suggestion coincided with information Elder Ballard reported in General Conference. He offered a list of items missionaries at the MTC had stated, “would have helped them most to prepare for their mission.” The first two items he noted were learning through better scripture study and learning *how* to study sincerely.<sup>14</sup> Apparently, experience and instruction precede meaningful scripture study; and therefore, precede effective missionary work.

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<sup>9</sup> Ballard, “Greatest Generation,” 48.

<sup>10</sup> Dustin West, “Scripture Study: Relationship between reading frequency, reading comprehension, and reading enjoyment” (Master’s project, Weber St. University, 2005), 27.

<sup>11</sup> Bothell, “Exact Replacement Scoring,” 70, 82.

<sup>12</sup> Bothell, “Exact Replacement Scoring,” 86.

<sup>13</sup> West, “Scripture Study,” 34-35.

<sup>14</sup> M. Russell Ballard, “One More,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 69.

Likewise, diligence is also an essential component of effective scripture study. From a qualitative study dealing with how college students use the Book of Mormon to resolve personal problems, Clyde Williams discovered, “For individuals to consistently and effectively use the scriptures to resolve personal problems, they must read carefully and thoughtfully.”<sup>15</sup> He noted that understanding and application are preceded by “considerable effort.” Williams also concluded that an established routine was necessary to experience the benefits of scripture study.<sup>16</sup> This research illustrated that thorough work and personal conviction are primary aspects of effective scripture study.

As previously noted, consistency, comprehension, and effort are noteworthy factors for researching personal scripture study. Yet, these features do not completely describe the type of experience individuals are having with the scriptures, nor do they address the fundamental nature and effect of studying God’s Word. West’s study acknowledged that aside from reading comprehension, 20 percent of students stated they enjoyed scripture study because it made them feel better, feel at peace, and made their day go better. He stated, “Clearly, there is another element involved in scripture study not mentioned in data collecting or reporting. Student apperceptions of spiritual inclinations may be as valid, if not more valid, than any other variable when discussing results and importance of scripture study.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, not only should exploratory research on personal scripture study examine frequency, understanding, and technique, but it must also investigate the spiritual, or internal, effect.

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<sup>15</sup> Clyde Williams, “An Examination of Influential Factors Affecting Students in Applying Book of Mormon Principles Toward the Resolution of Personal Problems,” (Ph.D. diss., BYU, 1989), 144.

<sup>16</sup> Williams, “Applying Book of Mormon Principles,” 144-145.

<sup>17</sup> West, “Scripture Study,” 33.

Top and Chadwick's research (which, interestingly, carried the title: *The Power of the Word*) noted that religious activities must be used to, "help adolescents internalize religious values and to feel religious experiences." Otherwise, these activities were not a significant deterrent to delinquency.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Harding added that acting out religious behaviors impersonally could lead to a "trivialization" of their ultimate purposes. He recommended that religious experiences could be increased as sacred text is incorporated into the lives of LDS young men. He noted, "an emphasis on 'doing' without an emphasis on 'becoming' is a major contributor" to what he referred to as, "religious negativism."<sup>19</sup> Elder Bednar addressed this point when he referred to the distinct difference between *going* on a mission and *becoming* a missionary.<sup>20</sup> He quoted Elder Dallin H. Oaks, who said, "In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to *know* something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to *become* something.... It is not enough to for anyone to go through the motions.... The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become."<sup>21</sup> Certainly, the religious activity of personal scripture study is foundational to the process of becoming. Therefore, effective scripture study implies deep, spiritual internalization.

This literature highlights the need for gospel study to be consistent, substantial, and internal.<sup>22</sup> This research also suggests, however, that scripture study for most Latter-day Saints is neither frequent nor meaningful. The impact of this condition of personal scripture study on prospective missionaries is, therefore, noteworthy. Peterson's study

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<sup>18</sup> Top and Chadwick, "The Power of the Word," 308.

<sup>19</sup> Harding, "Sacred Text," 81. "Religious Negativism" referred to negative attitudes in a religious context, and thus, a deterrent to religious experiences.

<sup>20</sup> See David A. Bednar, "Becoming a Missionary," *Ensign*, November 2005, 45-46.

<sup>21</sup> See Dallin H. Oaks, "The Challenge to Become," *Ensign*, November 2000, 32.

<sup>22</sup> See Hunter, "Reading the Scriptures," 64.

found that most students “were having less than a meaningful experience.”<sup>23</sup> The *Preach My Gospel* missionary guide stated, “Many missionaries struggle to know how to study effectively.”<sup>24</sup> And, as stated earlier, Elder Eyring remarked, students are not praying and studying in “the way that works.”

The quality of study among prospective missionaries is critical because effective missionary service relies on effective scripture study.<sup>25</sup> Effective missionary service also relies on timely preparation, which is inherent in “raising the bar.” Thus, accurate and descriptive data about future missionaries and their scripture study is extremely valuable. The previously reported studies offer little indication of the present status of scripture study among LDS youth, especially in the context of mission preparation. Thus, more research needs to be done to determine the actual level of study among prospective missionaries.

Therefore, this social research sought to answer the following exploratory question: *What is the nature of personal scripture study among prospective missionaries?* In answering this research question, this study investigated the following five sub-questions:

- 1) How much time are they spending with the scriptures personally?
- 2) What actions, habits, routines, and techniques are they using in their scripture study?
- 3) How was their experience with President Hinckley’s challenge?
- 4) What blessings do they identify from their personal scripture study?
- 5) How do they define effective (or meaningful) personal scripture study, and do they perceive their scripture study to be effective?

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<sup>23</sup> Peterson, “Increasing Scripture Reading,” 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Preach My Gospel*, 17.

<sup>25</sup> This point was established in Chapter 1; see also Doctrine and Covenants 11:1-30.

In conclusion, religious and academic sources show that effective scripture study has multiple factors—including time, training, technique, effort, motive, and internalization. Together, “raising the bar” and *Preach My Gospel* place direct attention on the personal scripture study of prospective missionaries. However, available social research offers little indication of the state of scripture study among future missionaries.

Consequently, the exploratory design of this research centered on prospective missionaries and used procedures able to account for the various elements that affect scripture study. Current published research had not focused on this group in this way. Thus, this study involved an imperative issue and uniquely merged a population and a methodology. As a result, this study generated descriptive data useful to parents, leaders, teachers, and future researchers.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Church leaders are greatly concerned about missionary preparation. If personal scripture study is effective and established in the life of the prospective missionary, then more effective missionary service will be performed—better missionaries, greater testimonies, improved work, more converts, etc. Also, certain problems for missionary trainers would be avoided, or at least, lessened by effective personal scripture study. Obstacles to missionary preparation such as a lack of basic gospel knowledge, an inability to ponder, or a lack of reverence for sacred things can be reduced or eliminated if missionaries are studying the scriptures effectively, or “in the way that works.”<sup>1</sup> In order to lift prospective missionaries to an effective level of scripture study, their actual level must be discovered and described. The aim of this study was to begin this process.

As outlined in the review of literature, academic researchers currently do not know many details regarding the practices of personal scripture study among prospective missionaries. Relatively little research was available to determine their actual level of study. Therefore, an exploratory study coincided with the research question—*What is the nature of personal scripture study among prospective missionaries?*

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<sup>1</sup> Eyring, “Helping a Student,” 109.

Thus, a qualitative research design was best suited for the purposes of this research.<sup>2</sup> First, since scripture study involves the heart and inner feelings of an individual, research of “personal” scripture study naturally required (at least initially) a more personal, in-depth approach. A thorough study of a few individuals could probe the places where personal scripture study really happens. Otherwise, relevant issues, beliefs, and motives would remain unexplored or even unknown. Next, a qualitative study could inform and should precede a quantitative instrument by suggesting the types of questions to ask and even the wording of the questions. Then, the quantitative study could produce reliable findings by knowing what to ask and how to ask it. Finally, the particular age group to be studied required special attention and sensitivity. To understand the mind and hearts of any group, but especially 18-year-old boys, required deep investigation. In other words, to begin the effort of really understanding the personal scripture study of future missionaries, qualitative research was the best place to start.<sup>3</sup>

### Explanation of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a term most commonly used interchangeably with other terms such as, naturalistic inquiry, ethnography, participant observation, case study, phenomenology, and fieldwork.<sup>4</sup> Fundamental to this research is the premise that it seeks to *learn* from people rather than study them.<sup>5</sup> It attempts to see their point of view and the meanings they have constructed to particular terms. The goal of a qualitative study is not

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<sup>2</sup> See David Williams, *Educators as Inquirers: Using Naturalistic Inquiry* (online book), <http://mse.byu.edu/ip/williams/674r.html> (Provo, UT, Brigham Young University, 2005); Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998); James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Group, 1979); Robert Yin, *Case Study Research, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> See David Williams, *Educators as Inquirers*, Chp. 2, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> See Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> See Spradley, *Ethnographic Interview*, 3.

to generalize (in the traditional sense), but to describe data in such a way that it can be transferable—or used in other settings.<sup>6</sup> It seeks to discover and explore, rather than confirm or test.<sup>7</sup> It acknowledges that accurate generalizations are very rare when dealing with people.<sup>8</sup> It argues that realities are holistic; and rather than isolating variables, it wants to portray how all the components and influences interact.<sup>9</sup> It allows, admits, and accounts for exceptions to the rule. It assumes that the viewpoints of all people and cultures are useful.<sup>10</sup> It believes that carefully describing another's perspective precedes understanding and, therefore, precedes progress as well as learning from the diversity.<sup>11</sup> It speaks two languages—the one used by informants of the study and the one used to report the study.<sup>12</sup> Its results are displayed with words, rather than numbers. In qualitative research the instrument of data collection is, fittingly, a person.

Certainly, qualitative research is time consuming. This requirement encapsulates its obvious limitation, fundamental task, and primary strength. Qualitative research is especially useful when exploring uncharted territory. It is also very valuable (and in some cases necessary) when beliefs, motives, feelings, or interpretations cannot be directly observed.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, it is, perhaps, essential when seeking to grasp an issue that has multiple components.

Therefore, this study of prospective missionaries necessitated qualitative inquiry due to its broad scope and exploratory, personal nature. Based on the review of literature

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<sup>6</sup> See Williams, *Educators as Inquirers*, Chp. 2, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> See Williams, *Educators as Inquirers*, Chp. 2, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> See Williams, *Educators as Inquirers*, Chp. 2, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> See Yin, *Case Study Research*, 13; Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 6; Williams, *Educators as Inquirers*, Chp. 2, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> See Spradley, *Ethnographic Interview*, 10.

<sup>11</sup> See Spradley, *Ethnographic Interview*, 10.

<sup>12</sup> See Spradley, *Ethnographic Interview*, 17-24.

<sup>13</sup> See Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 72.

and the research question, the design of this study (including number of participants, and types of data collection methods) was consistent with its purpose.<sup>14</sup> This study did not pretend to be able to comprehensively answer the stated research question. Rather, it contended that many studies of all types will be required, and this type was the appropriate beginning.

This study employed the method of case study research. In-depth, ethnographic interviews and focus groups produced meaningful data and rich descriptions about prospective missionaries' personal scripture study habits. Specifically, this study sought to find the actions and routines as well as the inner attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts that prospective missionaries have about the scriptures. Interviewing was the primary source of data collection. Focus groups supported the data found in the interviews.

### Description of Researchers

I personally have great interest in personal scripture study. I have seen tremendous blessings from my scripture study and have been captivated by the components and techniques that improve scripture study. I have taught seminary for eight years in the Church Educational System, which has included extensive effort in working with the youth regarding their personal scripture study. This master's thesis originated from my desire to discover beneficial data that would help the youth improve their scripture study habits.

In addition to the thesis committee, I utilized the support of two research assistants. Both willingly volunteered their support because they shared my goal to investigate the topic of personal scripture study. Also, as a social worker, one of these

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<sup>14</sup> See Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 64; Yin, *Case Study Research*, 5-7, 22-23.

assistants had thorough experience in interviewing. Primarily these assistants helped during data analysis and served as independent peer reviewers for the research activities. They also helped with some of the data collection methods.

#### Credibility, Dependability, Confirmability and Transferability

I followed four criteria to certify the trustworthiness of this study—credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.<sup>15</sup>

Credibility. Credibility means the study is conducted and presented in a way that is convincing to the reader. Throughout the study I utilized the following techniques to ensure high credibility of the findings: (a) progressive subjectivity checks, (b) clarifying researcher bias, (c) persistent observation, (d) triangulation, (e) peer debriefing, (f) member checks, and (g) transcript review.

The exploratory nature of this study required a fluid, flexible design. Data collection and analysis (which is simultaneous in qualitative research) continually created fresh perspectives and exposed necessary adjustments to the research.<sup>16</sup> I recorded alterations to the research design in a field notes journal. This activity included *progressive subjectivity checks*. This method explained how expectations changed during the course of the study. This information also helped to capture what was new, insightful, or unexpected. For example, I regularly recorded thoughts and impressions from conversations with the research assistants after we analyzed data. These notes also included ideas for new questions as well as current perceptions.

*Clarifying researcher bias* entailed revealing my background, viewpoints, and theoretical orientation both initially and throughout the study. I candidly stated my bias at

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<sup>15</sup> See Williams, *Educators as Inquirers*, Chp. 5, p. 1-6.

<sup>16</sup> See Yin, *Case Study Research*, 55; Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 151.

the outset of the reports. I also regularly included my thoughts and perspectives when applicable.

*Persistent observation* involved becoming familiar enough with valuable data that a clear direction surfaced and persistent learning could be shown. I utilized persistent observation through repeated interviews with the informants. Therefore, when I gained insights from one individual, I went back and inquired of others already interviewed. Furthermore, I followed up with informants and sought more detail on a given subject when it proved to be more crucial to the purposes of the study.

I was further able to verify the findings through *Triangulation*, which involved gathering data from multiple sources, methods, and inquirers. First, with respect to sources, this study selected five informants initially. The criteria required they were over 18 years old, male, and planning to serve a full-time mission. Also, the group of five contained one BYU student, one UVSC student, one non-student, one who reported he read scriptures everyday and one who reported he did not. This variety was large enough to investigate different study habits, which strengthened the dependability of this research. Yet, this number of informants was small enough to be manageable, and therefore, thorough and complete in the study design for each case study. (The aim of qualitative research is not to generalize statistically, but to informatively articulate through description.)<sup>17</sup>

Next, this study utilized multiple data collection methods. In addition to the interviews, information came from two focus groups. This added procedure offered an opportunity to confirm, enlighten, or challenge data in the interviews.

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<sup>17</sup> See Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 61.

The final form of triangulation involved multiple researchers. In addition to myself, the thesis committee, research assistants, and the informants themselves comprised the various inquirers of this study. *Peer debriefing* took place when a peer independently questioned the methods, interpretations, and biases of the researcher. This method proved to be a valuable check on the implications of the study and was performed by those serving on the thesis committee and research assistants.

The process for peer debriefing followed a consistent routine throughout the study. Following each interview, I wrote my initial impressions in a field notes journal. Then, following a thorough review of the recording, including transcribing significant portions, I developed thoughts, ideas, and hypotheses. Next, the research assistants listened to the interview and offered their viewpoints and opinions. I instructed the research assistants to keep an open mind in order to maintain the exploratory direction of this study. Following their appraisal and suggestions, I provided my analysis of what was gained from the interview. I also explained my rationale to them for any hypotheses or conclusions I had drawn. Finally, the three of us came to unified conclusions regarding the data from each interview, although, we did not always completely agree initially. For example, following the first round of interviews, I had hypothesized that Chad did his scripture study for the right reasons and was deeply committed to the scriptures. The research assistants drew an alternative conclusion. They questioned his conviction to the scriptures and were suspicious he was primarily reading consistently because of a class requirement. The follow-up interviews showed the latter conclusion to be more accurate regarding Chad's commitment to the scriptures.

Additionally, the technique of *member checks* enhanced credibility by allowing the data record and interpretations to be reviewed by the informants.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, they could approve that the findings were accurate and that their perspective had been represented fairly. Through an additional appointment each informant reviewed drafts of the results and offered their viewpoints.

A *transcript review* meant returning to the audio recordings, listening to them in their entirety, and checking them against the transcripts as well as my hypotheses. I substantiated the transcript data and searched for any possible contradictory information to my conclusions. I was therefore able to clarify and confirm the findings of this research.

Dependability. This study included a detailed and accurate audit trail in the form of field notes and reports for its duration. These records allowed for a dependability audit to be conducted, which entailed an independent auditor reviewing the research activities to evaluate my performance in meeting the standards of credibility.

Confirmability. Furthermore, a confirmability audit invited an auditor to require the researcher to verify the interpretations and conclusions of the study. This test demanded that the researcher demonstrate that the findings derived from sound logic and were supported by material in the audit trail. Invitations for dependability and confirmability audits came when analysis led to a change in study procedure or when reaching a conclusion. Those on the thesis committee or, in some cases, research assistants conducted these audits. This process began when the interviews were piloted and continued throughout the course of the study.

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<sup>18</sup> See Yin, *Case Study Research*, 159.

Transferability. Finally, (in addition to credibility, dependability, and confirmability) this study sought to establish transferability. Part of the intent and value of this study was that the findings could serve as a base of knowledge to inform future qualitative, quantitative, or historical studies. In order to assist in the transferability of this research, I used thick, rich description and a multi-case design.

*Thick, rich description* allows the reader to interpret the data independently through clear and adequate reporting, including details of time and context. I produced comprehensive stories of two informants. I also included explanatory information on each of the other interview participants. Furthermore, I included commentary and complete transcripts for each of the focus groups.

This study employed a *multi-case design*. This technique is a part of triangulation, but also aids in transferability because it offers diversity of experience and background. I interviewed five informants (a sixth was used as a pilot), and eleven others participated in two focus groups. The participants included both frequent and inconsistent scripture readers, college students from UVSC and BYU, as well as non-students, and individuals who had released-time and early-morning seminary.

### Approvals

I obtained approval from the human subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) of BYU prior to conducting research (see Appendix A). This authorization required a thorough examination of the purpose and process of this study, including consent forms from those participating. Approval also came from the Church Educational System and the Research and Information Department of the Church (see Appendix B). Additionally, the UVSC Institute Director (Jack Christiansen) and the BYU Dean of Religious

Education (Terry Ball) granted permission to administer the classroom announcements and survey. Furthermore, I notified the Church Missionary Department of this research.

### Recruitment and Description of Participants

This study selected all of its research participants from individuals taking missionary preparations courses at BYU religion and UVSC institute classes. Classroom announcements accompanied by a brief survey invited participants to inform this research. The survey served solely as a means of recruitment and not for purposes of scientific analysis (see Appendix C). The questions identified basic types of scripture studiers (i.e., how often, how long, and general experience). The basic form of the classroom announcement follows:

As part of a master's thesis in Religious Education, I will be conducting exploratory research with prospective missionaries regarding their personal scripture study. We need volunteers to be interviewed or to be part of a focus group. Participation is completely voluntary and confidential. You do not have to complete this survey if you don't want to. There are no grade implications for your missionary preparation class; in fact, your teacher won't even see the results of this survey. You may not feel you're an expert on the scriptures, but you are an expert on being a prospective missionary. That perspective is what we want to investigate. Also, we are looking for people of all types, backgrounds, and experience with their scripture study. Not everyone that volunteers will be selected.

Those willing to participate in the study provided their name and phone number at the bottom of the survey. From four UVSC classes, 15 volunteered to participate out of 45 completed surveys. From three BYU classes, 129 completed the survey and 51 volunteered to participate. This study selected nine UVSC and fourteen BYU participants for the research. I only considered individuals who willingly consented to participate and contacted them by phone call or email correspondence.

The selection strategy incorporated purposeful sampling, which means I deliberately chose particular individuals because of their specified experience with scripture study.<sup>19</sup> Based on the research question, selection criteria included individuals planning to serve in the next year, from the time of the interview. Also, since the study sought to investigate the typical missionary, only males could participate because they comprise the vast majority of full-time missionaries. Time availability also determined selection. Those participating needed to be available for at least six weeks, which allowed for the initial interview and two follow-up interviews, as well as the member checks. Furthermore, I chose informants based on their potential to contribute. The information provided on the survey identified individuals with various levels of scripture study experience. Both frequent and non-frequent studiers participated, as well as individuals who reported both positive and negative experiences.

Sample size for the interviews was limited to six, which allowed for a thorough investigation of each case, and yet still provided enough diversity to observe different scripture study backgrounds.<sup>20</sup> One of the six was used as a pilot interview for each of the three rounds of interviews.

I selected participants for the focus groups through a convenience sample of those not chosen for the oral interviews. Criteria for participation in the focus group followed the previously stated requirements and was based on the diversified needs of the study (i.e. non-students, students, those who study daily, and those who do not study daily), time availability and consent to participate.

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<sup>19</sup> See Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 61.

<sup>20</sup> See Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 83.

There was minimal risk for participation in this study. Participants may have experienced some emotional discomfort due to the personal nature of questions. An informed consent form disclosed this possibility and all participants signed it (see Appendix D and Appendix E). Also, each participant had the option of withdrawing at any time.

This study maintained confidentiality by storing identifying information (signed consent forms, tapes, and transcriptions) in a locked file cabinet in the off-campus office of the principal investigator. Only those involved in the research could view the data. After the research was completed, I deleted or destroyed identifying information, including digital recordings and written notes. Thus, there was a very minimal risk of a breach of confidentiality.

Aside from the possible potential benefits of increased awareness, understanding, and improvement of personal scripture study, participants received no compensation.

### Pilot Interviews

Pilot interviews provided several benefits in preparation for the actual interviews. They allowed for practice in gaining interview skills and developing rapport with participants. Pilot interviews also helped to determine the quality of questions as well as appropriate order and timing. I held two, one-time interviews, which were comprehensive in scope and covered several aspects of the research. These interviews contained questions about the research as well as matters of methodology.<sup>21</sup> I found individuals for the pilot interviews through referrals and used the previously stated selection criteria. These participants learned of their role and the purpose of the pilot interviews, which was

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<sup>21</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 80.

for me to practice interviewing (testing questions and timing) and develop skill.

Following the interview, they provided advice and opinions about the questions and the nature of the interview.

After conducting and evaluating the pilot interviews, I made adjustments to the foundational questions. First, the number of questions for the initial interview was reduced in order to keep the interview less than 60 minutes. Next, some questions were omitted and others were rephrased. These adjustments coincided with a dependability audit performed by research assistants. I reported the results of the pilot interviews to them and explained the rationale for changes to the interview guide. They also offered suggestions and ideas.

Additionally, a different participant was used, in conjunction with the actual interviews, as a pilot for each of the three rounds of interviews. In essence, this individual served as the first interview participant. He was found and selected in the same manner (through the surveys) as the other five participants. This activity proved to be very beneficial. First, I was able to confirm the approximate timing of each interview. Next, I gained practice in clearly explaining the role of the participant. Furthermore, this practice allowed me to review the appropriateness and effectiveness of all the questions for each round. I was essentially able to test new questions I had formulated during the research. Finally, the preparation and training provided by this piloting procedure helped me feel more confident and comfortable going into the actual interviews.

### The Initial Interview

I conducted all interviews on campus at BYU or at the UVSC Institute building, whichever was more convenient for the informant. Six selected informants participated in

a semi-structured interview, which lasted between 30-45 minutes. According to the research question and the subset of questions (identified in the Chapter 2), interview questions sought information and feelings about past and current scripture study habits and routines. They also investigated beliefs and attitudes about scripture study.

Along with each informant signing a consent form, I instructed all of them regarding their role in the interview process. Participants received the following information at the outset of the first interview:

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this research. This study is part of a master's thesis in religious education. The aim is to explore the nature of personal scripture study among prospective missionaries. You may not feel you are an expert on the scriptures, but you are an expert on what it's like to be a prospective missionary; so that is why I want to interview you and get your perspective and advice. This interview and all other interviews are completely confidential. There will be no identifying information in the reporting. I will ask you some personal questions, but you do not have to answer any question you don't feel comfortable with. I am only investigating, not judging. This interview will be tape recorded, and I will be taking occasional notes. You are welcome to pause to take time to think. There is no rush to answer. Overall, you can be totally open and honest, and just tell me like it is.

A semi-structured format allowed participants to freely express and prioritize topics and issues according to their choice. I did not predetermine the precise wording or order of the questions.<sup>22</sup> The initial interview utilized a list of foundational questions, which served as an interview guide (see Appendix F).

The technique of probing was a fundamental part of the interview process.<sup>23</sup> All participants had valuable information to offer. Exactly what that information was or how it would be expressed was unknown prior to the interview. I tried to maintain a high degree of sensitivity in order to capitalize on opportunities to delve deeper. Therefore,

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<sup>22</sup> See Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 74.

<sup>23</sup> See Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 80.

and naturally, each interview was unique and emphasized different aspects of the desired data. However, all interviews were consistent with the aim of the study and every interview posed all of the foundational questions.

Honesty and accuracy of response was vital to the success of this study. I addressed this issue in several ways, since it was a fundamental concern for collecting valuable data. First, participants were adequately informed regarding confidentiality. Next, they were also instructed regarding the purposes of the study, which was not to judge nor advise, only to explore. Hopefully, this perspective reduced any motivation to inflate responses. Finally, rapport with participants was a strong focus during the study. According to Spradley, rapport does not mean close friendship, but rather implies basic trust and respect.<sup>24</sup> I took time before and after every interview to answer the participant's concerns and develop, as much as possible, a comfortable relationship with the informant. The interviews were casual because my goal was to introduce informants into a comfortable, safe environment; and therefore, allow an atmosphere of open, honest response.

Due to the unique relationship between the interviewer and respondent, a full review accounted for any aspect that may have distorted the interview process. Possible factors included the health, motives, moods, and biases of the informant or the time, place, and positioning of the interview.<sup>25</sup> Participants did not appear to be affected by the place, whether the interview was held in a classroom or an office. Also, while some informants were more social than others, all were pleasant in conversation—before, during, and after each interview. No participant ever appeared rushed or irritated by the

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<sup>24</sup> See Spradley, *Ethnographic Interview*, 78.

<sup>25</sup> See Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 91.

interview process. Additionally, analysis necessitated the recording of all interviews, but participants did not appear to be affected or concerned with being recorded.

However, three factors appeared to alter the data: (1) time of day, (2) honesty, and (3) personality. First, the interviews held in the late afternoon seemed to be less effective than the ones held in the mornings or evenings, simply due to fatigue. It seemed less energy caused less response. This factor did not appear to be significant; however, it was noticeable. Second, even though no participant ever declined to answer any question, two informants (Dave and Nick) seemed to try to give the “right” answers, rather than what was accurate for them. Time with Nick appeared to dissipate this factor as rapport increased, although I recognized this tendency with Dave throughout the interviews. For this reason, the study used Dave as a pilot interviewee. Third, personality was an extremely noteworthy influence on the data. Chad, for example, was a very logical and pragmatic individual. He would respond to questions in a very non-expressive and brief manner. I had difficulty getting him to share his thoughts and feelings. Additionally, Mark seemed easily discouraged about life. I sometimes felt like a counselor when interviewing him, rather than a researcher.

### The Follow-up Interviews

The follow-up interviews were shorter in length and built upon data collected from the initial interviews. The follow-up interviews served a variety of purposes. First, they allowed for more time with each participant. Since the aim of the study was in-depth description, significant time with each participant was necessary. Also, the follow-up interviews allowed for continued inquiry with the same individual without requiring an

unreasonably long amount of time for one interview. Too much time in one sitting could have been counter-productive and may have skewed the responses.

Second, the follow-up interviews provided time to analyze data. I used this time to compile data, develop new questions, and formulate hypotheses. Each participant received the new set of questions. The rationale for new questions accompanied peer debriefing and a dependability audit by the research assistants. They helped formulate interview guides for the second and third interviews (see Appendix G and Appendix H).

Third, the repeated contact caused by additional interviews produced greater rapport between the inquirer and the participant. Rapport was critical in allowing for open and honest responses. All participants seemed more comfortable and expressive during the follow-up interviews.

Finally, the goal of this research was to describe, not to intervene. Consequently, the study allowed for relatively short time lapses between stages of the interviews in order to limit any alterations of routine or feeling each participant might have experienced due to their involvement in the study. Therefore, only one to two weeks transpired from the initial interview to the follow-up interviews. This relatively short time lapse allowed for the desired snapshot of the individual's experience and limited any changes the study may have caused. However, in spite of these efforts, the study did seem to affect the study habits for some. For example, Jeff appeared most affected by the interview process. He openly acknowledged his scripture reading increased in frequency because of this research.

## The Focus Groups

The two focus groups utilized eleven participants, total, and lasted for approximately 60 minutes each. Both groups met on campus at BYU. I moderated the focus groups with a semi-structured format and included similar questions used in the interviews. I also utilized an interview guide for the focus groups (see Appendix I). Due to the group setting, the focus groups intended to discover how prospective missionaries think and feel as a whole, rather than individually. Therefore, I excluded some specific personal questions. Also, because they were held after all of the interviews, the focus groups drew upon insights and interpretations from the interview data.

The focus group offered dynamics of inquiry that were distinct from the one-on-one interview. Negatively, due to the group setting, it may have stifled certain personal features of responses and may have limited honesty. However, positively, the focus groups seemed to produce greater description as participants enhanced and built on the comments of one another. Also, since the attention was not on any one individual, the focus groups provided a relaxed setting, which possibly increased candor in response. The benefits of the focus groups included confirmation of data, colorful discussion, and enhanced feedback. Chapter 4 reported significant and noteworthy portions of the first focus group. I also provided the transcript for the second focus group (see Appendix J).

I made several efforts to help the focus group participants to communicate comfortably. First, participants had time to read and sign consent forms. Second, each informant introduced himself stating his hometown and the status of his mission call. Third, the group received a full explanation regarding the purposes and expectations of this aspect of the research. I explained the following basic information:

Thank you for being here and agreeing to participate in this research. I am conducting this research as part of my master's thesis in religious education. We are trying to explore the nature of personal scripture study among prospective missionaries. You may not feel you are an expert on the scriptures, but you are an expert on what it's like to be a prospective missionary; so that is why you are all here—to offer perspective and advice. This focus group will be tape recorded for analysis, and I will be taking notes as well. However, complete confidentiality will be maintained. There will be no identifying information in the reporting. Your comments will be attributed to a different name. Each time I ask a question, it is open to the group, and there is no rush to answer. And you do not have to answer any question you do not feel comfortable with. Overall, you can be totally open and honest, and just tell me like it is.

Fourth, I provided refreshments before and during the focus group. The food appeared to help participants feel comfortable and assisted in developing conversations. Finally, the length of each focus group lasted less than an hour in order to not place an undue burden on the participants.

### President Hinckley's Challenge

In August 2005, President Gordon B. Hinckley issued a worldwide challenge to read the Book of Mormon before the end of the calendar year.<sup>26</sup> Church members made a unique effort to fulfill this challenge. Because of the considerable attention this assignment received, this study assumed prospective missionaries would be thoroughly familiar with the Prophet's challenge and that they would have made an attempt to fulfill it. These perceptions proved to be accurate.

Furthermore, the timing of data collection for this study conveniently coincided with the relatively recent conclusion of this task. Research occurred between February and April 2006. This study capitalized on this timing by investigating participants about their

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<sup>26</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Ensign*, August 2005, 6; see also L. Tom Perry, "Blessings Resulting from Reading the Book of Mormon," *Ensign*, November 2005, 6; Henry B. Eyring, "Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady," *Ensign*, November 2005, 38-39.

experience while it was fresh in their memory. Also, I assumed the alteration of routine caused by their actions to fulfill President Hinckley's challenge could serve as a reference point for the informants. Thereby, they could easily identify details about their personal patterns by recognizing the routines of their study before, during, and after the challenge. Consequently, I added a question about this challenge to the subset of research questions. Also, I included questions in the interview guide to accommodate for this opportunity. However, due to the group setting, the focus groups did not ask personal questions about President Hinckley's challenge.

### Data Analysis

A critical component of qualitative research is conducting the data analysis simultaneous with the data collection.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, this research began analysis when the interviews were piloted (the first data collection method) and continued regularly throughout the duration of the study. This process naturally influenced and enhanced the style of inquiry as the study progressed. Collection methods were adapted to account for new information. These adjustments clarified the body of knowledge and allowed hypotheses and conclusions to be narrowed.

I recorded field notes throughout the entire process of research. These notes included insights and tentative conclusions. They also explained the rationale for any changes to study procedures. I compiled field notes immediately after each interview and each focus group. This instantaneous review allowed thoughts and impressions to be captured and developed while the data collection experience was fresh. Furthermore,

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<sup>27</sup> See Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 151.

transcriptions proved very useful in providing clarity and rationale for the conclusions of the study.

Information was first categorized according to the subset of research questions identified in Chapter 2. However, since this research was exploratory, the study was designed to be fluid enough to allow for any data or category of information that was unexpected or unknown. I reported and described any discovery during this research that helped to answer the primary question.

For data analysis, I followed the constant comparative method.<sup>28</sup> I identified subjects and units of information from the reviews and transcripts of each interview and focus group. Then, through further comparisons and continued data collection, I compiled a list of terms for these units of data and organized them into tentative categories (see Appendix K). Naturally, I expanded and refined this comprehensive list throughout data collection. I added and merged categories as necessary. Additionally, to assist in cross-case analysis, I coded each unit of data with letters or brief word titles. For example, a quote from Focus Group B stated, “I found that when I read...with a marking pencil or with my reading journal there—when I am really trying to find something to pull out of it—that’s when I find that I read the best, and I’m not just going over the words. That’s when I find the hidden treasures.” I recorded in the margin of the transcripts the following codes: “E” (effective method-marking, journal, studying vs. reading, try to learn), “LE” (less effective-reading to read), and “B” (blessings-hidden treasures).

This process revealed the existence of interaction and overlapping units of data. For instance, the deadline of President Hinckley’s challenge, served as a motivation as

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<sup>28</sup> See Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 159, 179-187. Also, portions of analysis techniques were adapted from Spradley’s Developmental Research Sequence.

well as a form of structure. In this case, I categorized this single unit of data with three titles under three separate headings, “Fulfill President Hinckley’s challenge” under “Intrinsic Motivation”, “Deadline of challenge” under “Structure, and “Motivated to accomplish” under “President Hinckley’s challenge”. This effort allowed data to be organized even when it described multiple categories.

This persistent analysis formulated working hypotheses through constant comparisons within and between the categories and units of data. I tested these hypotheses during the remainder of research by asking additional questions and scanning for confirming or contradicting data. This process allowed me to progressively narrow the information over time and identify emergent themes. Consequently, I was able to clarify the entire amount of narrative data. Finally, I comprised the findings of this study into conclusions and implications.

### Reporting Results and Findings

Due to the personal and private nature of the interview questions, the reports retained complete anonymity of informants.<sup>29</sup> Hopefully, this stated procedure helped informants to be comfortable, open, and honest in their responses. Also, to assist the reader, I assigned names to the participants of the two focus groups according the letters A and B, respectively. This designation distinguished focus group participants from interviews participants.

The results of this study contain descriptive, case-study reports for two participants in the interviews. I depicted these cases in story form, yet topically (according to the subset of research questions). This chapter also includes a significant

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<sup>29</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 158.

portion of the transcripts for focus group A. The interview and focus group reports show the within-case analysis and offer relevant commentary.

Conclusions and implications serve as the culmination of this exploratory research and account for the cross-case analysis.<sup>30</sup> Descriptive rationale, which includes confirming data and quotations from informants, support these findings.

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<sup>30</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 147.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

To assist with the transferability of these findings, this chapter contains thorough and rich descriptions of the research data. As much as possible, this report attempts to let the participants speak for themselves. In a sense, they tell their own story in an organized and revealing manner. These depictions utilize considerable portions of the transcripts in order to offer a realistic presentation. This format is consistent with the goal of this research to provide thick description, which allows the reader to independently draw conclusions from the data.

For the interview participants, this chapter includes two comprehensive stories. A considerable number of quotes allow the informants to convey their perspective directly to the reader. Also, this report offers summaries and background information for three other cases. Additionally, the results of one focus group are reported. Data from this method offered a distinctive and dynamic view of the research. Consequently, this account includes a majority of the actual transcripts with concise and clarifying commentary.

Several factors may contribute to the assumption that these informants were better than average prospective missionaries. For instance, this research recruited participants from prospective missionary classes. Those willing to take a prospective missionary course could be seen as more pro-active and dedicated than those who are not enrolled in

such a course. Furthermore, these informants willingly volunteered to participate in this research. So, there may have been some pre-existing or unique interest in scripture study, which could be viewed as atypical. Regardless of these assumptions, all individuals used in this research were currently attending a prospective missionary class, and this background detail was taken into consideration when interpreting the results.

### Interview Participants

This study used six informants for the interviews (one of which was used as a pilot). This group comprised three BYU students, two UVSC students, and one non-student. Three were from Utah and had released-time seminary in high school, and three were from areas of the United States where early-morning seminary was offered. Three reported frequent scripture reading (five to seven times per week), and three reported lower levels of scripture reading (one to four times per week). Four completed President Hinckley's challenge and two did not. All six were enrolled in prospective missionary classes at BYU or UVSC. Also, all six were very cooperative and positive about participating in this study. Due to strict and complete confidentiality, this report does not use real names. Instead, the six informants are reported as Dave, Chad, Todd, Mark, Jeff, and Nick.

I chose to report full stories for Todd and Jeff. I selected these two informants because of their expressive and descriptive qualities. With each round of the interviews, I discovered that I could rely on them more than the other participants for open, honest, and articulate response. They also provided contrasting views. Jeff reported a more positive experience with scripture reading than Todd. Also, Jeff was a non-college student from Utah and was found at a UVSC Institute class, while Todd was a BYU

student and was not from Utah. I composed these accounts topically, according to the subset of research questions.

### Todd's Story

Todd appeared very honest and relaxed during the interviews. He was consistent in his demeanor and undeterred by minor disruptions. For example, prior to the first interview, the room I had scheduled was locked. Todd was very patient as we found another place to conduct the interview. During the second interview, the voice recorder beeped loudly, and we had a slight pause to change batteries. These interruptions, however, did not appear to affect Todd in any way. He was very patient and easy-going. He was also very willing to adjust his schedule to make time for the interview appointments.

Todd had a particular and noticeable skill with description and vocabulary. In addition, he was very thoughtful and diligent with his answers. In fact, many times I felt that he was trying to discover the nature of his scripture study as much as I was. While answering questions he would verbally walk through his thought processes. He appeared to have a genuine interest in the aim of this research. These characteristics, along with his willing and honest approach, made him especially informative and useful for the purposes of this study.

His ability and willingness to communicate created longer interviews. Almost twice as much time was spent with Todd when compared to the other participants. However, these interviews never felt laborious or extended. Our conversations flowed freely and the time seemed to be filled with valuable and interesting commentary. Todd was a BYU student from the mid-west United States and had early-morning seminary.

Time. At the time of the interviews, Todd was reading on average two to three times per week. He “would try for about 15 to 20 [minutes]” with each study, which was almost always at night immediately before he went to bed. He would normally read lying on his bed and admitted this practice “usually end[ed] up in a nap.” Throughout the course of this research, Todd’s frequency of scripture study fluctuated, but increased to five to six times per week by the last interview.

President Hinckley’s challenge. In spite of his intentions, Todd failed to complete President Hinckley’s challenge. He thought it would be a simple task, but the infrequency of his study didn’t allow for success. He explained, “I’d get into these spurts where I’d do pretty good, and then I’d slack off.” He did, however, make it further than he ever had previously. He related several failed attempts to read the entire Book of Mormon while in high school.

He identified the primary reason for not completing the challenge was the lack of a normal schedule in college. He offered more description about the effect of college life on his effort with President Hinckley’s challenge.

Eric: The challenge started around August.... When did you start reading?

Todd: Um, at first I started...a week or two after, when they started talking about it at Church a lot...and I started then. And that was more the, two chapters a day, three chapters a day, whatever it was. And, um, kind of as the summer went on and I got out to college, my schedule changed from what it was, then I kind of stopped reading.... So, I started right after, and then I restarted again in late November, something like that.

Eric: And was it school that mostly got in the way, or was there anything else that was blocking you?

Todd: Yeah, uh, college life is kind of—quite a bit different, you know, you stay up ‘til two in the morning in the dorms and that kind of stuff.

There's always people around and always things to do, and it's hard to just break away from that to go read your scriptures for a little bit. And I tried reading in the mornings, but that didn't work so well.

Eric: I understand. So how far did you get through then?

Todd: ...I got to about mid-Alma—about half.

Eric: And overall...how would you describe the experience—even though you didn't finish, how was your experience with the Book of Mormon?

Todd: It was helpful, just in everyday life, spiritually—to feel the Spirit more, during the times that I would be reading. But, you know, there's always times where I'd slack off, and my days didn't always seem as productive, or...they were just...another day.... When I was reading it, the Book of Mormon always seemed really interesting. The times when I'd be reading, it would be great, because it was just so interesting. But, I don't know, I guess I'd miss it when I was reading it...but then the times when I wasn't reading it, I wouldn't really miss reading it, if that makes any sense.

Eric: No, that makes perfect sense.... Why do you think that is?

Todd: ...There's just always other stuff going on, and so, when I was reading it, during the periods when I was reading it, it was something in my life, and so it was at the top of my mind. But, you know, I'd miss a day, and miss another day, and miss another day, and I'd kind of forget about reading the Book of Mormon. I wouldn't really miss it, because I wouldn't really remember that I needed to do it. I'd get in bed, and I might maybe have a, "Oh! I didn't read my Book of Mormon today." But then I'd fall asleep and forget about it 'til the next day.

This dialogue about attempting to complete President Hinckley's challenge revealed much about the nature of Todd's scripture study. First, it appeared to be a low priority for him. There were "always things to do" and "other stuff going on." Second, he felt he should read and had good intentions to do it. He even identified some blessings from the limited amount of reading he had done. However, this knowledge and intent was evidently not enough to develop a routine or to complete the Book of Mormon.

He felt that if he had finished the challenge, or if he had “stuck with it and had consistent reading during the challenge,” then he would have seen more of the blessings that President Hinckley had prophesied. He recalled, “Since that didn’t happen, I’m not sure I got all the benefits I was looking for.” Although, he was unsuccessful, Todd had noted some progress along with some positive results from his attempt to complete the challenge. His daily routine (or lack thereof) appeared to be the primary culprit.

Actions, Routines, and Techniques. Todd did not have a daily habit of reading the scriptures prior to, during, or after President Hinckley’s challenge. When asked about his study so far this year, Todd said he was back to two to three times per week. He said, “It’s kind of becoming more homework now, which is not what it should be, but, you know, with Book of Mormon class, you’re supposed to read these chapters by the next time we meet, so it’s like, ‘Oh, I don’t want to go do homework’-kind of thing. So, it’s becoming a real task.” Todd believed that viewing his scripture study like homework, or like “a chore,” was not an effective way to study the scriptures.

He often offered ways in which he had attempted to improve his scripture study. Interestingly, Todd used the same phrase at separate times of the interviews to explain his attempts to read in the mornings and to keep a study journal. His comment in both instances was, “That didn’t work so well.”

Todd mentioned he usually reads chronologically. He explained, “Generally, it’s chronological, because...I want to know all the stories really well.” He said he occasionally looks in the Topical Guide and Bible Dictionary if he is interested in a particular topic. He normally only used the footnotes to look for definitions of words.

Todd seldom prayed in connection with his scripture study. He had difficulty explaining why and suggested at one point that he still received positive results from scripture study sessions without having prayed beforehand. He said, “Generally, the times that I do pray before I read, it’s...when searching for answers to some problem, or some question. And so, usually I’ll ask for guidance in finding the right messages in the scriptures, finding the right scriptures—that kind of stuff...asking for the Spirit to be in my study.” He cited that these moments would produce more purposeful scripture study. Yet, when “things were going good,” his scripture study was less frequent and less meaningful.

Todd described his reading last year as not “the best.” He also explained that he would read less in the summer, even though, “It would make more sense that I would be reading, but I wasn’t. Because I had all this time, but that doesn’t always mean I was using it efficiently.” He also recounted that his scripture study in high school wasn’t very consistent either:

Eric: What do you wish you knew in high school about scripture study?

Todd: Um...I guess, it’s not so much knowing, but what I wish I would have done. I really wish that I had found a schedule that really did work, that I could read everyday. ‘Cause I knew I was supposed to read everyday, but that doesn’t mean I always did it.... I wish I had developed the willpower.

He explained that he was very busy in high school activities. He stated, “Trying to find a time to read the scriptures was always difficult.” He said he wished he could’ve developed the willpower to “stop my day wherever it was ...and read my scriptures.” He related that early-morning seminary would often inspire him to develop the habit of scripture study.

Eric: Is there anything that Seminary could have done to help you be in a stronger habit?

Todd: Um, I don't know.... I would go to seminary and it would be great. You know, we'd learn lots.... I'd get the personal conviction, "Oh, yeah, I'm gonna read now, because it's the right thing to do, and I feel it's good, and I love these scriptures that we're learning about, but the problem would be...I'd go to school...and then after that, I had (other activities), and I'd not get home until 6:00...and I'd have dinner, and then I'd have homework. And I'd have the whole day between when I had that— "Yeah, I'm gonna go home and read my scriptures everyday now, because it's the right thing to do"—to the point where I might actually have time to read the scriptures. And I'd usually forget, or I'd lose the conviction. I'd be so tired out that I'd be like, "Well, I'm just going to go to bed now."

He thought that setting a disciplined schedule while in high school would have helped him through the summer and in college (times when his daily routine was drastically altered, or "crazy"). He continued to struggle with "willpower" after high school. He said, "It's a matter of willpower to say, 'Ok. I'm gonna turn this off and go read my scriptures now.' But a lot of times I would just say, 'Oh, I'll just read them tonight.'" This pattern indicated scripture study was a low priority for Todd and worldly things could easily prevent scripture study. He simply admitted, "During the busier time of my life I would start to slack off in my personal scripture reading." He also offered a telling statement about time, when he mentioned that his prayer habits were better than his scripture study habits, because prayer takes less time.

Eric: What would have helped you get the willpower and desire back then in high school?

Todd: Um...I don't know. I think that, that's one of those things that is really more a self-motivated, um—you have to find it in yourself to really want to go read the scriptures. You have to develop the love for them, which I guess I'm not trying to say that I don't love the scriptures, or I didn't love the scriptures; but, um, just, I needed to...I probably needed to have just more of a testimony of the scriptures and the Book of Mormon. Um, I don't know, I'm kind of trying to save face here to make it sound

like I'm not apostate, but, I mean there's, just—there were times when the Book of Mormon, or reading the scriptures just seemed like, “Ah, well I could go read those, or I could do something else.” And I needed to...I really wished I would have developed more of a love to the point where the scriptures would seem more desirable to me than whatever else I was doing at the time. Um—ways that I think I could have developed that? I don't know...the love of the scriptures seems to resurface when there's trials in life.... But, that doesn't necessarily mean that I want to ask for more trials just so I can get a better love for the scriptures.

I felt Todd's response, at this moment of the interviews, had revealed to him that he didn't actually love scriptures. I didn't get the impression he had completely realized that up until now. This hypothesis seemed confirmed by his response to the question, “Why did you try to start reading on your own?” Todd made a scriptural comparison: “It's kind of the pride cycle thing. The Nephites got all proud and that kind of stuff and then they'd get smitten, so they'd have to turn back to Heavenly Father and repent and all that stuff...I'd forget about reading my scriptures, and then I'd have this massive thing come up, and it would humble me and bring me back to reading the scriptures.” This pattern appeared to be a consistent theme related to Todd's scripture study. He summarized, “The main thing that it comes down to is, just, I needed to have more of the love and enjoyment of reading the scriptures.” Todd didn't appear to have experienced very many blessings of scripture study while in high school. In fact, outward temporal rewards seemed to hold more value to him at that time. He confided that he would lie about the frequency of his reading to receive a reading award in seminary. He cited, “Just the fact that it was an award was the reason I wanted it; not because I was going to be reading the scriptures everyday.” He admitted that he didn't really have strong motivation to read the scriptures in high school.

It should be noted that Todd's regret about his poor reading habits in high school illustrated that some maturing had taken place since then. He also acknowledged the importance of scripture study in his current situation of preparing for a mission.

Eric: How could you go back, or how could you change things, to get people to read for the right reason, where awards don't really matter?... How could that happen in high school?

Todd: Um, that depends I think a lot on the maturity of the person at the time. Um, I know as a freshman [in high school]...I don't know if I was mature enough to actually see scripture study for what it was. I think it really was just one of those rewards, or one those award things to me.... I didn't have a very eternal perspective as a freshman.... I don't know what could have been said to me to view it as something that wasn't just a sticker on a piece of paper.... It seems like having a spiritual experience that directly results from reading the scriptures, or that's really enhanced by reading the scriptures—[He shared a time at a church camp that he had a personal, spiritual experience with the scriptures.] Having the scriptures there helped me to enjoy them and realize what was there and feel spiritually gratified.... Overall, summing up—having spiritual experiences that are enhanced by the scriptures...that helped me to grow to love the scriptures a lot. Unfortunately, I think most of the time that I really noticed them, was when it was one of these massive experiences, you know, going out to the woods, or going to Carthage, or going to EFY, that kind of stuff. And I don't think I really appreciated it enough the times when I was reading and the Spirit was there—it wasn't the overwhelming force that I had—but it was there. I don't think I appreciated those times enough.

He added that if he had found answers to personal questions in the scriptures, then he would have been more motivated and encouraged to read more in high school. He said, "I would have enjoyed the search for those questions more."

Eric: So then if I were to try to talk to someone that's five years younger than you, and tell them about scripture study, what advice...could be given to that person to help them gain a love and enjoyment of the scriptures. How does that happen, or what could be done?

Todd: ...Thinking of myself, five years ago.... One of the main reasons that scripture study is, or that I'm now realizing how much I wished I studied the scriptures is because the mission is coming up. I'm realizing, "Whoa. I really wish I had a much better knowledge of this a lot sooner."

The problem is that when you're 14 years old, the mission seems like forever off. So, it doesn't seem that urgent. It's kind of the procrastinator's curse—that you don't really realize how important something is until it's urgent. I guess, if I had realized how much that would have helped me, that would have helped me gain the desire. I don't know what—I guess it's different for each individual what exactly is their trigger that's going to get them to love the scriptures, or what you could say to somebody that would make them start loving the scriptures. For me, the mission might have helped me...when I was 14, if someone had said, "Look. You need to know this *for sure*, in the next year, so you can go deeper and deeper. And then by the time you reach your mission, you'll know it backwards and forwards." I don't know if somebody had said that if it really would have affected me.... I guess it's probably different for different people how it happens. Whether they're reading the scriptures everyday, and after a while they realize they love that, or they realize they love the scriptures, and so they start reading the scriptures everyday.

This exchange took place at the end of the second interview, in which, Todd seemed to have completely revealed his motives for reading, his regret for not exercising more willpower, and his lack of real love for the scriptures. At this point, I felt somewhat guilty wondering if I had gone too deep or been too personal, or had made him feel guilty. I took some time to remind him that my purpose was not to judge him, and everyone has a unique story. I thanked him for telling me the truth. However, there seemed to be a somber feeling at the end of the second interview—a deep, pensive tone. I realized that responding to these questions had fully exposed the condition of Todd's scripture study—in his eyes as much as in mine. He had realized, it seemed, very plainly what he wasn't doing and why it wasn't getting done. I was extremely curious how he would respond to this new awareness between the second and third interviews.

At the start of the third interview, he reported that he had only missed a few days of scripture reading (over two weeks of time). He referred to that as "pretty good." He had positively responded to an invitation from his roommates to get up early and read in

the mornings. He didn't join them everyday, but it had led to improvement. Todd used this assistance as an example of how support helps. He had never been able to read in the mornings before. However, he said, "I think this time I was able to get up more than I had before because I had roommates who would come and wake me up, and I knew they were out there. And it wasn't like I was just trying to do it by myself.... So, support in setting a routine really helps." This instance served as an additional commentary on the need for structure in order for Todd to study consistently and effectively.

Effective scripture study. Todd said some results of effective scripture study were finding something new, discovering something that helps with life, receiving personal revelation, and having "stuff stick in my mind." He also offered what he thought his role was in having meaningful personal scripture study. He revealed that, for him, an effective study, "generally happens during the times where I've had a longer period of good study habits.... Like, once I come out of a period of not having read for a while, like the first time I read, you know, it's somewhat helpful, but it's still working back into it. But then after awhile, after a couple of days of consistent reading, it starts to.... Every time I read it becomes more helpful than the last time I read." Clearly, consistency played a role in the type of experience Todd had with scripture study.

Todd said reading (as opposed to studying) the scriptures happened when he was just interested in the story. He appropriately described the result of reading: "Sometimes the words go in, but they don't do too much in there." In contrast, he noted that studying takes place when, "I'm trying to learn a principle, or...it's more when I have a question in life that I'm trying to find an answer to." He said studying takes place more when he has been "more stressed in life."

Eric: If you were to...outline to someone else how to study the scriptures, and then you were going to teach them what you've learned about how to study the scriptures, what would you teach them?

Todd: ...It's more than just reading, and you need to make it more than just reading. You need to make it apply to your life. You need to search out questions that you have. You need to really try to answer the questions. And the best way to answer them is through the Spirit. So, you need to have the Spirit in your study session.

Although he had already admitted to not often praying before his scripture study, he appeared to understand the need for the Spirit when he desired help. Todd continued, "Overall, the best thing about scripture study is to try, really try, to answer questions in your life, and questions that you have about other scriptures.... Open-ended questions lead to searching and finding new material and new scriptures." He added that when there is a "major" question or problem, that these are the times when, "I get into the really spiritual scripture study sessions; the ones where I am really trying hard to feast and do everything right, and so that's usually when I do pray." These levels of studying were not consistent for him, but they did occur.

In addition to prayer, Todd commented on his understanding of pondering. Todd connected pondering more to application. He said, "Pondering is not so much about what I read, but about what I need to do my life. It's more pondering about where I am spiritually." He also mentioned that certain verses will stand out to him and prompt him to "think deeply." He cleverly observed, "Sometimes your eyes will keep going, but your mind will stay on that one verse."

Todd also commented that the ideal study session includes finding scriptures that help with life, or that "stick with [him] later." He stated, "It will change my life a little bit

for the better,” by helping him apply the scriptures and live commandments. He also mentioned that scriptures will be “hard-hitting” when his scripture study was effective.

Eric: You used the phrase “hard-hitting.” What do you mean by that?

Todd: Yeah, um, just kind of the scriptures where you’re reading them and it just kind of jumps off the page at you. I mean, “Whoa! I’ve read over that scripture before, but now it suddenly makes sense.” It’s applicable to your life.... It connects why that scripture is valuable to you.

In spite of these isolated experiences, Todd did not consider his current scripture study habits to be successful. He also said that he didn’t normally think about what he had studied in the scriptures throughout the day, and he didn’t always look forward to his scripture study either. I asked him why.

Todd: I’m trying to do better this week with reading my scriptures, so I’m kind of excited to read them so I can fulfill this goal that I have to get my scripture study done.... You know, sometimes it’s just not on my mind. It’s not that I dread reading my scriptures. Although sometimes it’s like, you’re laying in bed and you’re half asleep, and you’re like, “Ah, I didn’t read.” And so, kind of, “Oh, I guess I’ll get up.” Sometimes, it’s just—not that I’m giddy with excitement— but I’m still kind of excited that I’m going to fulfill my goal for reading.

Eric: Why do you keep trying? Because I know it’s tough to get into the habit. Why do you keep trying?

Todd: Generally, they’ll be a talk, or a something that I’ll read, or a challenge in Stake Conference, or the *Ensign*, to have better scripture study. Sometimes it’ll just be myself, and I’ll just remember, “Oh, if I’m having a hard time with this test or something, then maybe I can read my scriptures and it will help ease my mind.” That kind of stuff.... Sometimes it will be a little bit of self-will that I need to get back on track. I mean, it is a commandment. I know it’s a commandment.... Knowing everything that we know about scripture study, it doesn’t even make sense that I don’t read everyday.

It seemed that doing his scripture study was more about personal achievement than personal relationship with God. However, it is very apparent that some desire exists with Todd to consistently and effectively study the scriptures. He frequently included it

on his “to do” list. He had tried several times to read through the Book of Mormon. In high school, he would renew his effort each seminary year and each calendar year. He would make goals, which would help “for a little bit.” The foundation of this desire appears to stem from his certain belief that it is a commandment to study the scriptures everyday. He blatantly acknowledged that, “it doesn’t even make sense” why he has yet to establish a daily routine. He blamed himself for not doing better and stated that getting a better scripture study schedule is “something that *I* need to do.”

Identified blessings. Although it can be safely concluded that Todd’s scripture study was less effective, he did identify several blessings from reading the scriptures. He noted, “During the times that I’m reading...it really does, just, it brightens up my day. It just makes it a better day usually. It makes me a happier person and...more friendly. Compared to the times when I’m not reading, those are the times when I feel more stressed out, more anxious about a test or a class or a paper that’s coming up... I guess, it’s a source of comfort and peace.” Todd recognized that he could always return to the scriptures for peace and direction. He commented that when he was stressed or needed to make big decisions that he would be more motivated to study his scriptures. He said, “I don’t think the answer will necessarily be in the scriptures, like in the actual words, but I’m trying to make my study more spiritual, so hopefully I can receive some answers.” He continued, “I definitely think that the more spiritual my scripture study is helps the spirituality around the rest of my life.... That definitely leaks a little more into my secular life.” He commented on his belief that scripture study could assist him with his school work.

Furthermore he mentioned times in his scripture study when he would learn some “hard-hitting” doctrines. I asked Todd to give me an example of when that experience had happened. He stated, “One that kind of recurs over and over is scriptures on the Atonement.... If you read a scripture on the Atonement, you go, ‘Oh! Yeah. Wow! I forgot about that.’ It reinforces your testimony on the Atonement. And you remember that you always need to be repenting, and you always need to remember the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.”

Overall impressions of Todd’s story. Todd clearly knew that scripture study was the right thing to do. Therefore, his testimony and good intentions were marked by repeated efforts, various attempts, and many goals to establish a consistent routine. However, thus far, he had been unsuccessful. He acknowledged that he struggled with willpower and that he needed support from others. He admitted that other things crowded out both the time and energy he intended to put into his scripture study. It was not difficult to conclude that scripture study was not a high priority for him, and that he lacked conviction for the scriptures. He appeared to like, but not love, the scriptures.

The absence of a schedule (that he would commit to) appeared to prohibit sustained, effective scripture study. He referred to this need often—before, during, and since President Hinckley’s challenge. For Todd, scripture study seemed to be a goal; a duty; something that he’s supposed to do, and somewhat liked to do, when it was convenient. It was evident that Todd saw blessings coming *from* his scripture study, but not *in* his scripture study. So, it appeared that he viewed scripture reading more as medicine, rather than food. And that perspective, I believe, explains why he had trouble making this a priority, and why he didn’t see the need for it unless he was afflicted. It’s as

if the scriptures were more about knowledge and indirect blessings than communing with God. Furthermore, his admission about rarely praying in conjunction with his scripture study emphasized his impersonal approach to the Word.

However, he had some positive, personal experiences with the scriptures. He, therefore, must have been applying some efficacious principles. First, although he wasn't able to get a solid routine established, he certainly had a persistent resolve to keep trying. His focused "spurts" appeared to provide good experience with the scriptures, which allowed him to comment on blessings he had seen from scripture study. Second, these positive times most often came during challenges and trials that had humbled him, which revealed the possession of a sure testimony that the scriptures can help. Yet, this cycle seemed to illustrate a lack of conviction, because he failed to consistently incorporate his knowledge into action.

Member Check. The member check with Todd confirmed the accuracy of his story. After reviewing this account, he reported it was a "fair interpretation." I was slightly concerned about how Todd would respond to this story since certain aspects of it were somewhat negative and could have even been considered harsh. However, he summarized his perception of the story as an "eye opener" and stated, "even if it's not what I want to hear about myself, it is an accurate description and a valid interpretation."

### Jeff's Story

Jeff seemed to approach the interviews with an "open-book" style. He was extremely candid with his responses, which were highlighted by a clever wit and descriptive vocabulary. His sincerity and genuine nature were readily observed. For example, in the first interview I sympathetically apologized for making him talk a lot. He

positively responded, “I like talking.” In addition, he had a pleasant and calm demeanor throughout the entire interview process. He normally gazed upward as he spoke and often paused to carefully select his words. Jeff also willingly shared details he felt were relevant to the research. It was clear he put a great deal of thought and feeling into every answer.

Jeff was very reliable and punctual with his interview appointments. Some scheduling conflicts arose, but he voluntarily adjusted his schedule to accommodate. His interest in participation appeared to begin with curiosity and moved quickly to enthusiastic involvement. He even remarked at one point, “I enjoy answering your questions.” He also thanked me for the “opportunity” at the end of the interviews.

Jeff was not attending college classes at the time of this research. He was recruited for this study in his prospective missionary class at the UVSC institute. He grew up in a predominately LDS area in Utah and had released-time seminary.

Time, actions, routines, and techniques. Initially, Jeff was reading three to four times per week and for short amounts of time—five to ten minutes. He admitted that his current routine was, “probably not as good as it should be.” He desired to improve and readily acknowledged a discrepancy between his intentions and his current actions. He explained, “Most times, with work it’s really hard. I get home late, and I’m really tired. So, I usually just read a chapter or two. And that’s still ok, but sometimes I miss those nights. I’d really like to get to a point where I read at least 45 minutes to an hour everyday. That’s my aspiration, but...at this point, I’m not that close.” Jeff specifically identified the need for a schedule when he commented further on his challenges with time, his intentions to do better, and his low amounts of reading.

Jeff: That's probably just because of work. I need to...shape up.... I usually get home, it depends on the day, but usually around 10 or 10:30. And so...that's just enough time to get into bed and say my prayer, and I'm out. But maybe I could read in the mornings.... I just need to figure out something where I can read everyday.

Eric: How was that schedule while you were doing President Hinckley's challenge?

Jeff: It was perfect.... I didn't have my job yet. And so, that's one of the big reasons. But...I just need to get a schedule down and use my time a little more wisely, other than watching [television]. That's kind of wasting time.

Eric: And so that's probably the reason why the 'one to nine' [the amount of minutes of scripture reading he had marked on the recruitment survey]. After you get home from work there's just not a lot of time?

Jeff: I'd just kind of crack it open, read a chapter, and then close it.

Jeff's intentions to read consistently were plainly evident. Yet, he had difficulty managing his time to better prioritize his scripture study. He did, however, eagerly react to the minor amount of structure provided by these interviews. By the end of the research, Jeff had increased the frequency of his study. This progress was noted in the second interview.

Eric: How have the last two weeks been with your scripture study?

Jeff: [Quick response.] I've read every night since our last interview.

Eric: Why is that?

Jeff: Uh, I know, because I wanted to say that really bad in this interview.

Eric: Oh, ok.... What about this interview is motivating for you?

Jeff: I don't know, I think it helps just to have somebody there to...ask questions.... It makes you really think about why you're doing something, when somebody's asking if you're doing it or why you're doing it. And it kind of helps you realize the importance of scripture reading.... It just feels good to, first of all, do something that you know is right, but then to kind of have somebody there to help you along with it.

Jeff's consistency had diminished after President Hinckley's challenge, and he seemed thirsty for a disciplined schedule. Apparently, this study had intervened, in a way—offering some motivation and structure for Jeff's scripture reading. He quickly capitalized on this form of support. He indicated his poor scheduling of each day was a cause of not studying the scriptures regularly.

Eric: What are your goals or plans for improvement for the future?

Jeff: I definitely want to schedule my day better.... Like last night I went to bed (late), and I had just cracked open my scriptures. I read a couple chapters, which is better than what I usually do. But still, I probably could have invested a little more time in it, instead of watching TV earlier in the day, or just wasting time away. And that's my goal, as of now, to...have a mindset of the entire day, rather than...spending time doing things that are less important.

Time was clearly a critical issue to Jeff's scripture study. He further emphasized the need to schedule time when commenting on what he would teach others about scripture study. He said, "I think a big part in teaching somebody...is you'd have to first...make sure that they had enough time to read.... You know, you have to set aside enough time in your day to not just feel like you have to hurry and quickly speed through the scriptures. That's probably the first step...is being able to manage the time in your day to allow proper scripture study. And then...just trying to take it slow and not just breeze through something that might be extra powerful in your life at that point."

President Hinckley's Challenge. Jeff had a very beneficial experience with the Book of Mormon and completed President Hinckley's challenge. He said, "It was incredible. That was the first time my family and I had read the Book of Mormon...since I was a little kid." He felt that the prophet's challenge and promise offered determination to read.

Jeff reported that the daily routine during President Hinckley challenge was “amazing.” He explained, “We read almost every night, and when we’d miss a night we’d make up for it the next night by reading double. We were really disciplined when we had that deadline to finish it by.” He added, “The prophet’s challenge just really helped us to shape up. And just kind of take it to heart, I guess. It means a lot more coming from the prophet, than, I don’t know, your friend or whatever.” Jeff said he normally read three chapters a night, and finished a week before the new year. He also mentioned that his ward had been very instrumental in helping the reading process by setting up groups of families to challenge and remind one another.

Jeff noted that reading the Book of Mormon had positive effects on his ward. He said, “I saw a greater amount of love between the families themselves in the ward as a whole.... I saw, in the families that had taken up the challenge, a type of unity and love between them that wasn’t really visible before.... It was just a different feeling almost.... I just saw so much happiness in the lives of the people in my ward.” Jeff commented the first testimony meeting following the challenge was uniquely enthusiastic for his ward.

Jeff’s story with President Hinckley’s challenge included a deeply personal experience. He began reading for this challenge with his father, who passed away a short time later.

Jeff: We took up the challenge, my father and I, before he died. And in that time I felt so at peace and so comforted.... During that time when we were reading the Book of Mormon together every night, we’d stay up late...talking about things that didn’t have to do with the Book of Mormon necessarily, but the Book of Mormon kind of inspired thoughts in us, and helped us be more open.... It was kind of at the pinnacle of our relationship—when we were being the most honest with each other and we felt most comfortable, and we were able to express our love for each other the most I think—that he actually passed away.... So, it’s kind of a big, bitter-sweet experience. But...the inspiration of President Hinckley

to, in my case at least, help my father and I to come closer those last few months just helped so much.”

Jeff commented further on the conversations he had with his father while reading the Book of Mormon each night.

Jeff: It [the Book of Mormon] inspired conversation in all types of areas.... We talked about the things we had learned.... He took it as an opportunity to remember the things he learned as a child and on his mission.... He took it as a chance to tap into those things, and help me to understand him better...and his love for the gospel.... It was just amazing to me. We talked about everything—about work, about friends and family.... Every facet of the gospel had something to do with us somehow, that we we’re able to express and talk about.... [Reading the Book of Mormon] helped a lot at first just to help us feel more comfortable around each other, and feel more free to talk about religion.... We just found more excitement after reading the scriptures, and talking about the gospel and about the ordinances.... As we started, we kind of broke that barrier, and just from then on, those last few months that he was alive, he and I just connected so much, and we were able to talk freely about everything.”

Reading the Book of Mormon with his father, along with their subsequent discussions, strengthened their relationship. This process also appeared to improve Jeff’s relationship with the scriptures. He said, “The Book of Mormon is just an incredible book. It’s about an historical people, but at the same time, there’s so much that’s relevant to our day. And there’s so much that we can learn from it, even though there are people talking from thousands of years ago. It’s amazing to me. It’s really cool.” He added, “It just seems like it’s an entirely deeper book each time I read it. There’s just more things that are relevant to me at that time when I read it. And there is...all kinds of symbolism—just deeper meanings to everything in the book almost. And I think reading through it...my testimony of Joseph Smith grew so much.... It’s an amazing book.” Jeff clearly respected the Book of Mormon, and he diligently responded to the prophet’s challenge.

Effective scripture study. Jeff viewed praying beforehand as “important” for effective scripture study. He recounted that he always prayed before his studies, “I really ask sincerely that things that are complex will be made known. And that I’d realize the things I don’t know and just see things in a different light.... Every time I read the scriptures it’s a little bit different it seems.... Whenever you read it with a new pair of eyes and you can always get something out of it. I usually pray for that, so I can see the scriptures in a new light, and try to learn something new, or be able to apply it in new way.” This perspective further illustrated the respect Jeff seemed to hold for the scriptures, and reliance he had on the Spirit to assist him with his scripture study.

He saw scripture study as an opportunity for continual guidance. He recognized the need for divine assistance, and therefore, viewed the preparation of his heart as a vital effort. He continued, “I think to have effective scripture study...the two most important things are having the time made available...and being in tune with the Spirit.... You can get so much out of the Book of Mormon by reading it cover to cover, but...you can also get a lot out of it by, kind of looking at the book and saying, ‘What do I want to learn today?’... So, I think the big key is having enough free time to follow the Spirit and allow yourself to learn and...soak it in more.” This comment illustrated the personal manner in which Jeff approached the scriptures. Furthermore, Jeff expressed he “definitely” believed the Holy Ghost was essential for effective scripture study.

Eric: Why do you believe that?

Jeff: Just because...you can kind of look at the scriptures as a book...but the actual importance lies in the teachings that are in it.... Sometimes you can skip over those if you’re just buzzing through the scriptures.... I think when you’re in tune with Holy Ghost, you can realize the truth of the Book of Mormon, and you can realize how important and true the teachings are...It’s just kind of an upward cycle when you read the Book

of Mormon with the Spirit, because you can feel the Spirit from the book. And you can apply that to your life, and you can go forward with faith and do everything you know you should do, when you take the courage to ...take the first step and read the scriptures with the Spirit.

Eric: ...Where do you think that belief came from?

Jeff: I think just through experience. I don't think I would have felt that way at all in high school.... I went to seminary, and I loved my classes, but I think it's kind of like a thing that...some Mormon kids do to just...follow the crowd or whatever. It's really possible in seminary class to go listen to your funny teacher, or go and talk to your friends...and just have a good time. But, it's important I think, to take it a little more seriously. And after high school, I realized there's not going to be that person everyday to make jokes and help me memorize a scripture, and that I just...needed to do that for myself now.... The summer after I graduated, I tried to read everyday and tried to keep that spirit in my life that I found in seminary.... Since having taken that [scripture study] so seriously, I felt an abundance of spirit.... It made my life...easier and helped me realize how important the scriptures are and how relevant the gospel is to your life.

Apparently, as Jeff made a personal decision to study the scriptures more seriously, he also began to gain a deeper appreciation for the scriptures. He elaborated on this internal choice in the second interview. He stated, "I think when somebody gets that curiosity, or that ability to ask themselves questions, or question...their mind or belief system; that's when they truly are able to gain strength and are able to clarify what they believe." Jeff advised that individuals must make their own decision to study the scriptures.

Eric: What would help high school students to love the scriptures?

Jeff: I don't think there's any one thing that can be forced on a high school student to make him appreciate or learn to love the scriptures. I think...through good examples...they can see the love that others have for the scriptures and try to find that love themselves.... In my rebellious case, at least, if somebody had really tried to take me through a class or a course that was designed to teach me or make me love the scriptures, I don't think I'd buy it, or I might see it as trivial or insincere.... In my case, I...had to figure it out by myself. And I did that by seeing the

people around me and seeing their love for the scriptures and the gospel. And I wanted that—what I saw in them.... And my love is definitely developing for the scriptures.... After I graduated seminary and there wasn't that time everyday to go be in a room with my friends and we're all studying the scriptures at the same time; I...took it as an opportunity to take time out of my day each day to at least try to learn something about the gospel, whether it was in the scriptures or in a (book). And so I think...once that desire is instilled for each person to get their love of the scriptures or to understand them more clearly that nothing will really stop them.... But I don't know how to instill that. I think it's different for each person.

Jeff spoke on the influence of others and the impact their example can have on the personal choices of individuals to study the scriptures. "There's definitely a line between knowing those things and wanting to do those things for yourself.... I think that whenever you meet somebody who...emulates the things that they learn...that will eventually inspire someone else around them to do those same things." Jeff related he had several leaders and examples that encouraged and inspired him to do better with his scripture study.

Jeff also included the need for consistency in order to have effective scripture study. He explained, "When I don't read when I don't feel like it, then I feel even less like reading it the next day, and even less like reading the next day. It's just kind of a downward cycle.... To kind of counter that...I've just tried to teach myself that it doesn't work that way. When you don't want to read the scriptures, that's the time that you really need to read them, just that very second that you don't feel like praying or reading the scriptures, that's when you need to just kind of bite the bullet and do it." Additionally, he included that repetition and a scheduled time each day were critical to learning to love the scriptures.

However, he felt if someone viewed scripture study as a “duty or a responsibility” then it would lack power. He elaborated, “If you are able to set a pattern in your life, [scripture study] will then be able to express that power and love.” Jeff also recognized the need to make sacrifices to allow time for scripture study and to make it a habit. He explained:

When you forget yourself...and stop thinking about...the time you could be doing something else, you can always find something in the scriptures that you need and that will be helpful to you in your life. That’s when it’s enjoyable, when you’re able to go to the scriptures and ring all the juicy bits of knowledge out of it. It’s just so powerful and so deep and so relevant to every facet of life. It just becomes so necessary to your life I think, when you finally are able to see that, and be able to partake of that.

Jeff added his scripture study would be improved by writing about his studies. He said he learned in his missionary preparation class about missionaries using journals for thoughts and inspirations. He added, “I had lots of times where I’d read the scripture, and I’d think, ‘Wow! That’s a really profound thought’ or, ‘Wow! That’s really applicable to my life.’ But then I don’t write it down, and the next day, or by the time I wake up the next morning, I totally forget what that was.... I’d really like to start a scripture journal.” In addition to writing, Jeff identified other ways to distinguish casual study from the kind of study that produced real results.

Eric: What is the difference...between reading the scriptures versus studying the scriptures?

Jeff: There’s definitely a big difference. Like, when I’m really tired after a long day, and I just throw open the book and read a chapter to say I read that day, I don’t really get much out of it.... I just go to bed and forget about it, wake up the next day and go about my day. But when...I open up the Book of Mormon or the Bible...and really study it...it stays with me, and I wake up the next morning, and I can still remember it and it’s still with me throughout the whole day. When you... invest your time in the scriptures, it pays you back, I think; rather than just paying your dues, and going to bed and forgetting about it.... I’ve definitely had...a mix of

both studying and just skimming through. But definitely on the nights when I have taken the time to stay awake that extra...10 or 15 minutes, and just really think about the scriptures,...I feel better about it, and I get more out of it. And, like I said, the next day when I wake up, I can still remember it, and I still think about it. And I can still gain insight on it even when I'm not reading the scriptures.

Jeff maintained that a serious study produced greater results than a superficial reading. This belief was repeated when he reflected on his high school years.

Eric: What do you wish you had known in high school about scripture study that you know now?

Jeff: That it's fun; that you can get a lot out of scripture study. Like all throughout seminary in high school, I never really took the time to actually study a scripture. I just kind of read it and said, "Oh, that was fun. I learned [this].... I just never took it seriously, I think. And if I could do it again, I'd definitely spend more time in the scriptures and spend more time paying attention to the subtleties that the teacher might have the insight to bring out. Whereas, I just kind of went there to laugh at a funny guy...and that's not the point of seminary at all. It's totally different than that. So, I'd definitely go for different reasons if I could go again.

Identified blessings. Jeff described a noticeable change when he began reading less after President Hinckley's challenge. He stated, when reading more often, "I'm happier, and my thoughts are more positive." He said that his life was more "buoyant." On the other hand, since reading less consistently, "I've noticed a lot more frustration in the work place when I'm not totally centered on the gospel and not totally centered on the scriptures and on praying.... So, I can see a big change when I don't do what I think is right—especially when I don't read the scriptures."

Jeff identified a unique "feeling" that comes to him when he reads the scriptures. "I think...the feeling you get when you read the scriptures is something where you can feel at peace and feel in tune with the Spirit, and feel like you are able to think more

clearly. And when you take that attitude, or mindset, out into life, it really...helps you to be more happy, and help you to...be the example that the Lord would have you be.” He also mentioned that this “feeling” is the primary factor that convinced him that he should read his scriptures everyday.

Eric: How do you know that scripture study is the right thing to do?

Jeff: I think it based strictly on the way that I feel throughout the day that I decide to read the scriptures. It’s almost like I have confidence...to keep my head up.... I’ve noticed for sure that I when I read the scriptures, I’m happier, and I [am more successful] at work.... Like, every aspect of life, I look in the mirror and I feel happier and more confident. It’s just strange almost how directly it...correlates to praying and reading the scriptures.... It all kind of contributes to, you know, making yourself a better person.

Eric: ...What gives you that motivation to keep trying?

Jeff: ...It feels good to learn.... It’s always nice to look at something you’ve seen three or four times...before and be able to kind of look at it in a new light and be able to have the ‘eyes to see’-change, or see a change in yourself...in the daily routine of life.

Eric: How would you say that the scriptures do that? Like, it’s words on a page. It’s a book that we read. How is it that the scriptures are able to bring about changes in our real lives?

Jeff: Well, we’re told that it’s the purest book of any—the purest, most correct book of any that is on earth at this point. And it’s obviously the most inspired. Like Joseph Smith said, through reading it and by abiding by it’s precepts man would get closer to God than by any other book. And...the doctrines and the principles in the book are so much deeper and more profound than anything that we could read in like a Dr. Phil self-help book or anything.... But we have to be in tune with Spirit to pick out those subtleties and to be able to apply [a story] to our lives.... We need to associate this book that’s...thousands of years old to our day.... There’s...an infinite wealth of knowledge in the book that you can go back and associate with your life and with...anything you might be facing. It’s just really cool.

Jeff had a strong belief in the ability of the scriptures to edify. This viewpoint was evident at the beginning of the third interview. Jeff had related a poor decision he felt he

had made and the disappointment he consequently felt. He then explained how he turned to the scriptures for relief. He expressed, “I wanted to read [even] more, because I felt that emptiness and that lack.”

Throughout the entire interview process, Jeff revealed that he found deep, personal meaning in the act of studying the scriptures. He often mentioned the “feeling” he got from the scriptures and the effect reading them had on his life. His realization of the internal purposes of scripture study appeared most evident with his response to the last question of the interviews.

Eric: What do you ultimately hope to gain from your personal scripture study?

Jeff: Well, I hope that eventually after years of reading and studying the scriptures that I’d feel qualified to be nearer to God, to be closer to God...I’d hope that...I’d see myself worthy and knowledgeable in all things and holding the priesthood...That I’d be able to have the courage to stand up for the things that I know are right, that I’d have the courage to not excuse myself from the gospel and not excuse myself from anything. You know, and just have that there as a guide and a light in my life to always help me make decisions and help me avoid sin or temptation or anything that the world can throw at me. I’d like to have the scriptures there as kind of like a shield, or guide, or an iron rod, just to always have them there.... Because they’re one thing that’s very constant in this world. And I think by having a knowledge of the scriptures and being able to be well-versed in the scriptures and be able to see the deep, underlying principles and precepts of the scriptures and of the stories, we’re able to apply those to our lives, and we’re able to grow and learn from the examples of those in the book, and we’re able to ultimately get closer to God and become more like him.

Overall impressions of Jeff’s story. Jeff appeared to hold a healthy understanding for the purposes of scripture study. In fact, his entire approach toward the scriptures appeared to be based on his desire to be personally edified. He saw the scriptures as sacred and treated his time with them accordingly. For him, studying the scriptures was less a “to do” item and more a time for spiritual growth. Therefore, even though his study

was inconsistent at times, he seemed to gain deep benefit from the scriptures because of his personal and sincere feelings for them. This observation seemed to indicate that time was not the only factor for effective scripture study. Certainly, attitude toward the scriptures had an enormous impact.

However, Jeff struggled to act according to his belief. Consequently, his scripture study was infrequent and less effective at the time of this research. Jeff's story highlighted the need for structure. Good intentions and positive experiences were not enough to produce consistent, effective scripture study. Prior to President Hinckley's challenge his scripture study was "off and on." He said, "We'd kind of go with it for a while, but then we'd...fizzle out." And in spite of a very diligent and powerful experience with the challenge, Jeff's study appeared to return to his former inconsistency. On the other hand, his intentions and attitude were so strong and positive that any form of structure appeared to produce immediate success. Obviously, President Hinckley's challenge, including the associated promises and the solid deadline, worked for Jeff. And interestingly, even the minor amount of structure offered by these interviews had a noticeable outcome.

Jeff's study with his father was clearly successful, both in frequency and spiritual impact. This conclusion was characterized by the enlightened conversions they would have following their studies. The Book of Mormon connected their scripture study to their lives, and their lives to one another. This pattern appeared to offer a model for effective scripture study. What if Jeff were to use these same methods of scripture study with his Heavenly Father—setting a consistent time, diligently studying, and following each study with open discussion?

Member Check. Jeff's member check was very simple. He simply remarked that he "loved it." He said he found no inaccuracies and had no disagreement with the interpretations.

### Brief Descriptions of Three Other Interview Participants

Conclusions for this study were drawn from data of three other interview informants, in addition to Todd and Jeff. Therefore, brief yet adequate background summaries and descriptions are included to understand these participants and gauge their contribution to the findings of this study. Reviews are constructed for Chad, Mark, and Nick and deal with issues of background, context of interview procedures, general routine of their scripture study, President Hinckley's challenge, and highlights from the data record.

Summary of Chad. Chad was a BYU student and grew up in an area that offered early-morning seminary. Interviews were held on campus at BYU. He was always punctual and appeared to be very responsible and organized. He was also quite friendly and appeared comfortable with his participation in the study. Chad approached the interviews with a relaxed, confident manner. He was thoughtful and direct when answering questions. He was also very concise with his wording, which in this case, was undesirable for the purposes of this research. While it was easy to get answers from him clearly and honestly, he was generally too brief. It was difficult to gather feelings from him or to completely sense what he was really thinking. I used many follow-up questions, or sometimes, I simply asked the same question in a different way in order to elicit more response. He seemed very pragmatic and logical about the entire process. Incidentally, he also seemed to be the same way with his scripture study.

Chad remarked when he began reading the scriptures consistently (which began with President Hinckley's challenge) that it changed his life. He stated, "When I read the scriptures, I'm more patient with people I think. It affects me emotionally.... It also helps me to love people better; just seeing the love that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have for each of us...it just helps me see people differently I guess. It's also helped to have the Spirit throughout the day.... I've learned more about how to feel the Spirit, how to discern what the Spirit is, and I think that's really helped a lot. It's helped answer a lot of questions I have." Chad learned from his religion teacher to pray in connection with study and to keep a scripture journal. These activities appeared to produce positive results from his scripture study.

Chad's participation in this study did not appear to alter his personal scripture study at all. He was already consistent, reading everyday, and seemed to continue on that course. Although, I was not convinced he was completely committed to the scriptures. He certainly was a very diligent person and appeared to respond to challenges and assignments well. However, when this outside pressure was removed, he didn't stay committed. He did not read over Christmas break, for example, after he had completed President Hinckley's challenge. Nor had he read well before the challenge. The reading requirement in his religion class the following semester motivated him to start reading again. Guilt and the grade requirement were stated motivations to read when he didn't want to. In spite of identified blessings, scripture reading still appeared to be a duty to him. I was very curious if he would continue reading the scriptures consistently after this semester.

Summary of Mark. Mark attended released-time seminary in Utah and was faithfully attending UVSC institute classes. Interviews were held during the day in classrooms at the institute building. Mark was timely for his interviews, with only one exception when he forgot and never arrived for an appointment. However, he quickly rescheduled and proved to be a very willing participant in this research. Mark seemed to like to be investigated and used this time to verbalized difficulties and struggles he was experiencing in life. He also appeared to be easily discouraged about various things that were taking place. He would willingly share his thoughts and feelings, and also included how he felt his life circumstances affected his scripture study.

Mark was very erratic with his scripture reading at the time of the interviews. In the first interview, he reported reading 1-2 times per week, but had been reading 5-6 times per week the month previous. Two weeks later, he remarked in the second interview that he hadn't read at all since we had talked last. However, in last interview, he updated he had started reading everyday. He claimed that school and work issues were the causes of this inconsistent reading schedule. He had no set routine for scripture reading. When asked what in high school would have helped him to be a better scripture studier now, he said, "Getting scripture study into a habit. I can say...100 percent, that is the number one reason why I struggle now." He also revealed he never had family scripture study while growing up.

Mark appeared to struggle with reading in general. He did not complete President Hinckley's challenge, in spite of a strong desire. He said that he just read too slow and couldn't keep up with the schedule. At the end of the first interview, he commented, "Now you've studied someone who doesn't like to read." He also said the scriptures are

the only books he reads on his own. Furthermore, he was very frustrated by the requirement in seminary to read a set amount for a grade. He always tried, but never completed the reading for any course of study.

However, Mark exhibited a persistent effort to incorporate effective scripture study into his life. He even kept trying to finish the Book of Mormon after the end of the year. Also, when he studied, he would dedicate solid amounts of time—45 minutes to an hour. Yet with this determination, he appeared to view the scriptures as a duty. He had a testimony that scripture reading was the right thing to do, but didn't appear to understand why.

Summary of Nick. Nick grew up in Utah with released-time seminary. He was a college student at UVSC and was found for this research at his prospective missionary institute class. All three interviews were held in a small classroom at the institute building in the evenings. He was slightly late for each appointment and appeared busy. However, he had a calm and witty personality and appeared to enjoy the interview process.

He was relaxed, confident, and precise with his responses during the interviews. Initially he seemed to attempt to give what he thought were the right answers, as if he felt he was being tested rather than interviewed. However, this obstruction to the research diminished with the follow-up interviews as both rapport and understanding of the research purposes increased. Nick also mentioned the interview process seemed to increase his awareness of what he believed about scripture study; and therefore, he noted his study was “definitely better” because of having to talk about it.

Nick was a consistent scripture studier, reporting that he read everyday. He successfully completed President Hinckley's challenge and remarked it was the first time

he had been “engaged” in scripture reading. He added that his previous experience with the scriptures had been more duty-oriented. He offered a strong opinion about the way personal scripture study was treated in seminary. He stated, “I think in Seminary...just the whole, *Did you read today?*, and that’s half your grade or whatever. Um, I took that as kind of an assignment—something I have to do. And so, I definitely went into scripture reading with a totally wrong attitude, rather than wanting to read to get something out of it.” He felt scripture study should not be viewed as a “to-do item,” and reported he had learned this from his father’s example. He mentioned he believes his dad is very knowledgeable with the scripture, yet, “He’s still studying and learning more.” Nick appeared to have a strong family background and complete support.

Nick prayed before every study and often referred to the need to have the Spirit. He said he would pray for the Spirit to testify of the truthfulness of the scriptures and help him understand, learn, and remember teachings in the scriptures.

### Focus Groups

Even though the focus groups lacked the opportunity to ask personal questions, I quickly recognized the strength of this data collection method. The results of these group interviews were significant in helping to discover what prospective missionaries think and feel about personal scripture study, which was extremely useful for this research. Participants revealed perceptions about scripture study as a prospective missionary, what they thought of scripture study in high school, and the direction they were headed in the future.

The dynamics of the group setting were light-hearted and enjoyable. However, naturally, these informants made serious and thoughtful comments. While moderating

these groups, I found myself both enthusiastic and entertained by the feedback and responses. Since there were multiple respondents, each question generated a wealth of valuable data. In order to capture the feel and reality of these sessions, this section provides ample portions of the transcripts with only marginal commentary. The report of Focus Group A is included in this chapter. Focus Group B transcripts are found in Appendix J.

Consistent with the effort to maintain confidentiality in these reports, informants' comments for the respective groups are attributed according to an assigned name.<sup>1</sup> Each focus group is reported separately because the circumstances surrounding each group were quite different.

### Focus Group A

The first focus group was held on campus at BYU on a Saturday morning. Eight were scheduled to attend, but two never arrived. The group of six was comprised of four BYU and two UVSC students. None of the participants knew each other prior to this meeting, yet everyone seemed to interact very well. They appeared comfortable and even joked with one another. Some spoke more freely than others, but all were well represented. Only slight portions were omitted from the following transcript of this focus group:

Eric: What would you say defines an effective or meaningful scripture study?...

Aaron: For me, I don't know if it's all of it, but one point is, I usually try to go in with a question or something I'm just looking for...and when I finish if I have an answer or a lot of insight, then I'd say, "That was worth it." That's one of the factors.

Eric: Ok. So...going in with a question and finding an answer. Thanks.

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<sup>1</sup> To distinguish focus group participants from interview participants, informants for focus groups A and B were all given names that start with the respective letter, *A* or *B*.

Abe: I think something else that's really effective is when I do my scripture study, I keep a journal along with it as I'm reading through of any insights I gain. I guess just depending on the types of insights I get from each study session, I guess that to me says how quantified that my study was, or how well it worked for me....

Alex: I think it's interesting as I'm reading, and I kind of do the same thing with the study journal, but sometimes things come to me that don't even relate to the scriptures I'm reading. And, you know, you just kind of have to write that down. Like...I don't know if I can share this example, but after conference, I was reading my scriptures, and I was thinking a lot about Pres. Hinckley and there was a scripture that I read, and it just kind of brought that out. And so, I wrote that down in the journal. It kind of strengthened my testimony about our prophet, but the scripture really had nothing to do with it. So, I don't know, just weird things like that....

Adam: To me, when I read the Book of Mormon—the Book of Mormon in particular, though—my day goes better, and I can actually...feel a difference.... I think a really effective reading is...if when I put the book down, and I'm like, "Yeah, I have the Spirit with me." Like I can just totally tell. So...maybe those days are a little more intense than others. But it just feels good.

Alex: I think also when I read my scriptures, I also pray to have the Spirit witness of the truthfulness of the things I'm reading, and also...it kind of opens the Spirit from the very beginning. So, it's good to be able to say your prayers and thank Heavenly Father for the scriptures...

Alan: It's a lot easier to keep reading after you pray, because...sometimes if I just go right to reading the scriptures I end up falling asleep first, and I don't stay awake or focus as easily as I do when I pray before.

Eric: I see a lot of you nodding your heads on that one.

[Agreeing laughter from all.]

Eric: How does prayer keep you awake?

Alan: I don't know, maybe it's just...it has the Spirit there and helps me focus more on what I'm reading than everything else around me, or just the fact that I'm reading this just to say I'm reading, you know, just to keep reading everyday or something like that. It [prayer] helps me focus my spirit, or at least, my ideas and thoughts and everything.

Andrew: It sets a tone.

Adam: You go into it a lot more formally. If you start out with a prayer, you're like, "I got to be serious about this. I can't just read it."

Abe: You get a lot more out of it....

Abe: I find at night I don't get as much out of it as when I read in the morning. Like I used to read at night and then I tried switching it to the morning, and I found that I got a lot more out of it just by doing it in the morning.

Adam: That's because nights go way too long here. [Laughter.]

Alex: Yeah, I read in the morning, too. I like to read when I'm alone and when there's nobody really around.... It just makes it more personal, I guess.

Eric: So, if I'm understanding you right, if I were to summarize everything we just talked about,...there's something about focus, and when you're focused things go better. There's things you do to focus whether it's pray, or write, or have it in the morning, having a question.... And when it's not focused, it's kind of more just reading to read.

Alan: Yeah, just reading to go through it.

Eric: As if it's a duty type of thing.

Adam: You can tell when you're focused and not focused, you know. You don't get as much out of it. There's a difference. It takes energy.

Eric: Very good. Thank you for all those responses. I really appreciate that.... In process of answering that question, you guys identified some blessing that were coming to you from your scripture study. What other blessings would you identify that you, kind of, connect with your scripture study?

Aaron: I'd say just overall confidence in what you're doing throughout the day. I mean, I also keep a little scripture journal. And, you know, you get...specific direction about the things in your life; 'cause you've got your mind thinking of things you have to do today and things like that, and then you're reading the scriptures, which brings the Spirit, so you automatically put them together, and you kind of just get all this guidance that's really helpful. And, um, to me that's the best blessing, I think, is just a firmer trust in God's will for you and understanding what that is. And, of course, you have the Spirit with you after you read, and that's really helpful throughout the day as well.

Adam: Honestly, it keeps me away...it helps me with temptations and keeps me away from sin. Like...the day's I don't read, it's tough. And so, I always try to start my day off right, and sometimes I forget, but that's just how it goes....

Alex: I think it opens my mind a little bit while I'm reading, and I'm able to comprehend it. It makes the school day go better, I guess, if that makes sense. That's just one of the blessings. I think it really does help you to put on the Armor of God and help you be protected from those daily battles.

Aaron: I don't know if this classifies as a 'high up there' -blessing, but at least at the end of the day you can always say, "Well, at least I read my scriptures." It's an accomplishment...

Adam: I love that, being able to say, "You know what, I don't need to study for this class, I'm gonna read my scriptures." And you don't even feel guilty, because it's the scriptures. [Laughter from all.]

Abe: Something else I also find is as you read...certain scriptures might stick out at you at a certain time, and then they might go dormant in your mind for a while. And then, just, occasionally when you need them, they'll pop back up and they'll be just the right thing to say to someone, or something else. It's almost like they were just implanted there for a reason later. I've found that's really helped, too.

Andrew: One thing I've noticed is...not just read, but really study true doctrine. And I'm faced with questions.... It's always helped me to where if everyday I'm studying something new, and I'm understanding the doctrine of the Church and the Lord's gospel, it's easier to answer questions. You understand it more and you'll remember things.... It just starts clickin'—things start clicking you start to understand your purpose for being on this earth and it's really neat.

Aaron: Yeah...it really helps to understand the doctrine and where it is in the scriptures, especially in preparation for a mission.... I didn't read as much before I came to BYU....

Eric: Thank you, everybody for your responses here. I really appreciate your thoughts.... You mentioned a couple of interesting things about prioritizing scripture study over homework, which is probably easy to do no matter what [Laughter.].... But that sometimes even if you didn't get much out of it, at least, you did it.... This might come across as a weird question, but, how do you know, or where did you learn, or why do think that scripture study is the right thing to do?

Adam: Hmm, that's deep.

Aaron: Well, the scriptures are the word of God. And, I don't know, it seems like there's so much in this world that isn't like solid or isn't definite, and to me that's kind of the draw of the scriptures—that it is solid and it is definite.... There's a lot of things you don't know, but you know you should read the scriptures. It's a commandment, but it's also kind of a personal...anchor, I guess.

Alex: I think that...you know, I started reading my scriptures because that's the way I was taught growing up, but as I started to see those blessings in my life from reading the scriptures, the desire to read the scriptures...increased also. You know, it turns out to be like, you *want* to read your scriptures everyday, not that you *have* to read your scriptures. And so, it's kind of neat to see; you know, it's the blessings that kind of motivate me to read my scriptures...

Aaron: It just kind of came through being obedient at first.... You're taught you're supposed to, so you're like, "Whatever, I'll try it." And you read it, and you try and read it everyday. And it first starts out as obedience, kind of a reluctant obedience, and then...you soon see the blessings, and it's something you can't really deny. And it's something you...hold on to after that because of blessings and personal experience.

Adam: For me it was like,...I hadn't always been really active in scripture reading before, and then um, I had kind of been doing some bad things. But then like, you know, for the longest time I really wanted to like change myself and just change my life and then, you know, you've always heard, "Read your scriptures." And I'm, "Oh...whatever." And then, so, one day I just decided to try it, and then things just started happening. It was just amazing. My life totally changed. And ever since then it's, "You need to read you scriptures. It's good. It changes your life." That's how I learned for myself.

Andrew: I think once you get to that point; like you said, if you've been away from it for so long, you really don't feel a need. You're numb to the feelings that you have from reading the scriptures, and it just feels like an obligation. But once you get to that point to where it like...I mean, it's always in the back of your head, and you *don't* read them, [then] you feel guilty. You feel like, "I could be doing so much more to serving the Lord, you know, just by studying the scriptures, and when I don't, I feel like I'm taking not only blessings away from me, but—that's our Heavenly Father's joy, is to bless us, when we do what he asks—and you feel like you're kind of jipping Him out as well. It's kind of a weird thought, but that's just kind of how I feel.

[Agreeing comments from others.]

Eric: Ok. Thank you very much.... You've mentioned a lot of things about how it changes our lives and blesses our day, and even makes school go better.... What is it about words on a page that does that?

Alan: I don't think it's necessarily words on page, because there's so much more to those words. Like sometimes you can open that book, and find exactly what you're looking—exactly what you need to hear. Like, not exactly what you *want* to hear sometimes, but what you need to hear. And it makes you just realize you can make it through.

Andrew: I like how he says, "It's not what you want to *hear*." We're reading; we're not talking. But the words are speaking to us.

Aaron: Basically, it's just the words are written by prophets, which are inspired, and it's true doctrine, and they're just good...and there's a lot of value in that. But then there's also the words that the Spirit tells you, which is why I keep the journal real close. I probably spend more time writing than I do actually reading. It's kind of the thoughts you get between the lines and the application that really, um, seals the deal for me. And so, it's the words on the page, which bring the Spirit and kind of remove distractions, and the words that you receive through revelation.

Adam: Sometimes I think that even though...there's parts where it's just words on a page.... But just the fact that you're reading it, means that you're obedient, and then you'll get blessings, and you'll still get what you need out of it.

Abe: I think it's a lot like when you go to conference or something, you just get that huge spiritual feeling, like after listening to speakers. And the scriptures are basically just transcribed talks from the past. And that's a lot of the feeling I get when doing a meaningful study. It's just like going to conference.

Alex: Well, I think that when you read the scriptures, it gets you thinking. It gets you...interested in what going on in the scriptures, and you actually start thinking about what's actually going on here, and how can I apply to my life. I think as you do that, you are inviting the Spirit, and the Spirit's...testifying to you of the truths that you're reading. And, I don't know, it kind of gets you charged up for the day...with the Spirit....

Adam: It just helps your whole mindset for the day.

Eric: Alright, thank you very much. Ok, let's go back a few years in our lives to high school.... What do you know now about scriptures and scripture study that you wish you knew five years ago?

Adam: It works. [Laughter.]

Aaron: I just never gave it a chance, I guess, when I was younger. Other things interested me more. But, I mean, now I can see...just having it there as a mostly constant thing has helped me. I mean, I've grown so much in the past year reading it pretty much daily. I just think what could I have done with those five years had I been living in that direction more. And, you know, you kind of grow exponentially by reading it, and you kind of slide down if you're not. In high school, we need those kind of things a lot more than we realize at the time. There's a lot going on and a lot of pressures. It would have been nice, just to know how it works and to have given it a chance. No one can tell you that it works; you just have to learn it for yourself.

Alex: I totally agree. I think that if I had been studying the scriptures back in high school like I do now, where would I be right now, you know, spiritually speaking? And so, you can't really regret what you've done, but...I wonder where I'd be right now if I had spent that time reading scriptures instead of doing other things.

Adam: I could have avoided a lot of heartache and pain. I totally regret not reading my scriptures. I didn't know what I was doing, you know. It didn't mean anything to me, because I didn't really care. But now looking back, it's like I had this valuable tool that I just wasn't taking advantage of, you know. I just, uhh! I regret it.

Abe: I think something else...in high school, I don't think I knew how to study the scriptures properly. Like I used to just read it through, just like flipping through pages. I never even thought of studying topically back in high school.... And also the concept

of...starting with a prayer, in high school that didn't even cross my mind. It's really helped when you've learned properly how to study the scriptures, or a way that works for you.

Adam: I only read because my mom was the seminary teacher. Honestly, it's the only reason I read.

Aaron: My dad was, and I didn't read. [Laughter.]

Alex: It was hard for me to understand the importance of reading the scriptures when I was in high school. Like, you could explain to me so many times, this and this and this will happen. But you don't really comprehend that...until you go and actually do it. I don't know, just getting myself motivated to read the scriptures back then...was hard. I don't really know what could have made it better.

Aaron: I think it's knowing how to do it personally for you. You know, it's more than reading, you know, it is a study. And it does require prayer, and it does require...thinking and pondering. You know, that's what it says, to ponder the scriptures prayerfully. And, you know, you just kind of forget that, and I don't think I truly understood what those words meant, and so I just didn't do it.... It's just one of those things, you just never really gave a chance, and so you never developed the habit, and you never got to receive the blessings...

Alan: My problem was, I always thought I was too busy with school and sports and all that stuff. I never thought I had time to. And now I get to college, and I've got even less time.... I just wish I would have realized it a whole lot sooner. And it would've been like he said, "A lot less heartache."

Eric: Thank you very much for answering these questions. I know some of them are a little bit personal, but I appreciate your answers.... If you were to advise high school students today...about scripture study, what would you tell them?

Aaron: That's a rough one, because, I mean we were that age and people were telling us. I don't know, maybe get them to commit to at least two solid weeks of doing it.... But they have to go into it willingly. As far as how to make kids do that, I don't know.

Adam: You gotta find out for yourself.

Alex: In high school...I would read my scriptures, but it wasn't meaningful.... You had to read your scriptures for seminary or whatever, and I'd just open up the scriptures, and I still find myself doing this every once in a while, and just kind of reading the words and not even paying attention and not even understanding.... My advice would be...understand the importance of having meaningful scripture study. I mean, if you're going to be reading the scriptures, why not try to get something out of it.

Alan: Don't read it 'cause you have to.

Alex: Yeah, well, and it's good to read the scriptures, and it brings a peaceful feeling, and if you're not reading them anyway, it's good to open them up and read a couple of verses; but, just try to make that meaningful. I don't know how to emphasize that...

Aaron: Encourage them to use prayer. That's something that didn't really...hit me until I got here [to college] is you can put them together. You can open with a prayer, pray in between, and close with a prayer of thanks for the scriptures. That right there, I think, boosts you up to a whole different level of what kind of things you're going to be getting out of your scripture study. And if I had understood that, or at least tried it, I don't know if I would have developed that habit, but it would have helped a lot.

Andrew: I think a lot of youth...look up to guys our age.... One thing I've noticed in the young men is that they really, especially to me, because, you know the bishopric, they're older and the young men's president, they're older, you know they've done this their whole life and their strong, but I think they look at me a little bit more as...their leader, but more as a friend. As they see you either going to church early or just sitting down early and reading your scriptures, I think that does something to them. Um, maybe it's not enough to convince them to do it, but at least they see you doing it. And I think if you were to actually take the time and tell them what the scriptures mean to you, um, I think it could affect them a lot.

Alan: It's like the big brother example type thing. Everybody looks up to their big brother....

Aaron: It's not necessarily that they don't want to read their scriptures. I mean, I always thought, "Wouldn't it be nice if I had the will to read my scriptures every night like I'm supposed to." But...you can think wouldn't it be nice and you think that'll just develop on it's own later in my life, which I guess it kind of did, but you can't just wait around for that kind of thing to happen. It was a change I had to initiate myself. And I think you have to realize it's not just going to come.... It's a change you have to initiate completely yourself, I think, to make it most effective and to make it work and last.... When they see people...pretty close to their age, just a little over or a little more...experienced, I think they can see that it's pretty close to home that they're getting worth out of it, and, you know, they can ask, "Well how did you develop that?" And it's just, you just did, and you had to try it. It's not going to happen any other way. You're not going to wake up one morning and have the drive to read your scriptures everyday for the rest of your life.

Adam: You guys ever go to EFY? Like, that for me,...every time I went...I'd be solid reading for a month after that. I'd always die off, but—It was just, 'cause you'd go there and these counselors are college people, and they're like the coolest guys in the world, and then they'd make you read for...a half an hour everyday. And you don't want to *not* read, 'cause there's girls there [Laughter.].... And [the counselors] teach you some elements of how to really read your scriptures and stuff. And when you go out there to read, and the first day, I'm like "Oh, man." But then by the end it was good. And then I'd just kind of keep with that pattern, because, you know, you're on such a spiritual high

after that. If there was some way...to get people excited about reading the scriptures.... Get them so that they want to do it. And like, it's not a chore, or some really deep doctrine confusing thing. But just...get them excited about it and get them to do it just to try it out and see how it feels, and they'll probably go with it.

Abe: I think something else, is like what we were talking about earlier, is when we...for seminary we might have had to read our scriptures. I think what might help is to maybe change how they require us to read the scriptures. I think if maybe they put in something about take time to ponder what you're reading, while reading the scriptures, and that was added into the assignment. I think that could make the study for them a lot more meaningful, and at a younger age maybe get more out of it.

Aaron: Especially with seminary, you feel like you kind of have to book it, 'cause everyone's putting up their stars.... You just kind of feel like, "I gotta read. I don't really have time to learn something." And to tell you the truth, I haven't read that much sequentially in the...past year in the Book of Mormon. I've only done...topical...and just...where the Spirit tells me to read.... I've found through that you can still gain the same broad perspective and understanding...of the book, but...it's also the doctrine. I think it's really good to read sequentially, but...it's better to read for a certain amount of time, and, you know, a single verse could occupy that whole time....

Eric: Ok. Thank you guys. I really appreciate your comments here. And, can we keep going? [I received an enthusiastic, "Yeah" from all. They seemed as if they were enjoying this.] I don't want to take up too much of your time, but I really like your thoughts and what you're sharing with us, and I've got more questions I want to ask.... I'm getting the general feel here that high school wasn't the best and that now things have dramatically improved with scripture study since then.... What changed? What got you going now? Why is it so good now?...

Aaron: For me, it was a class I took, Book of Mormon A, last semester with [Brother] Sommerfeldt.... He's a lot different than any of the other Book of Mormon teachers here at BYU.... He didn't want us to read sequentially and he didn't want us to do those other things. And he outlined...every day, like he made us do it, he made us keep track...for a grade, but he also said, pray before...pray in between, pray after and do it for a half-hour and then you can check that off that you did it for the day. And you know, I at first did it kind of reluctantly...but when you are forced to pray...you can't pray like halfheartedly, I find. You have to just... "I'm gonna do this"...with that class, it really got me into the habit of doing it and feeling the Spirit, so it was...the class that changed it, but it was still like, I myself had to have a testimony of it before I really started to get things out of it.

Andrew: I had a couple things that really hit me, getting more into a positive area, group of people, not that I had bad friends back home, but...spiritually, they didn't encourage me to become better or to study my scriptures.... Some of my member friends did, but most of my non-member friends did not. So, I think just getting into an atmosphere where everyone is doing it so, "What the heck is wrong with me?" You feel kind of left behind almost. And, two, I have my patriarchal blessing...reading that and understanding what

my purpose was. Detailed? I don't think any of us really know...but I know that it is to serve the Lord. That is what we are all here for, to assist in building up the kingdom of God. And that I need to get on the ball with my scripture study. That's just kind of what helped me.

Alex: For me, it was the mission...it's not like when I got close, I just opened my scriptures and started reading, but...the bar has been raised and I wasn't living the way I needed to be to be on a mission. I know that reading the scriptures has helped me come to that level. So, I think having a goal in mind, being goal-oriented helps you read the scriptures, helps you kind of grow a little bit more.... "I'm gonna be out teaching this stuff. I'm gonna be out testifying of these things. I've got to know this stuff"... You grow up in the Church, and you know all these things, but you've really got to get your testimony for yourself. That's what got me reading the scriptures more. I needed to know these things for sure, so I can have that set testimony.

Aaron: A mission just puts things into perspective. You say you've been preparing your whole life and you think, "Do I really have 19 years of preparation going in here?"... You think, "I've got to have a firm testimony of this if I'm gonna be preaching it." I'm realizing, you know, that most of...what I'll use on my mission and most of the experiences I'll have or personal experiences I'll testify of to investigators, to the people, will come during that time that I actually spent reading the scriptures. 'Cause that's when I had the Spirit most often and that's when I had those experiences most often, and sure we've got a firm doctrinal understanding...growing up through Primary and through the Aaronic Priesthood and stuff, but it didn't come until it was actually personal application and personally doing it.... I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't read the scriptures enough this past year, I don't know what experiences I would rely on to be able to share my testimony or if I even have a strong testimony enough to do it.... It's really an essential thing if you are going on a mission to be able to do that. I think that's the problem, why they are raising the bar, is a lot of kids just went and didn't have those firm testimonies, and they would gain it eventually...but you lose a lot of time on your mission and a lot of potential there, so you got to raise the bar.

Abe: I guess something else is...missionary preparation classes and in there we have to teach mock missionary lessons to pretend investigators. One of the things I was finding is...unless you really know which scriptures that you are going to be teaching, they're not just going to come out of nowhere. The Spirit can only tell you what you already know. So for me, that's really helped because I'm looking in the scriptures for things that I can use later on. It's just sort of focused that.

Alan: For me, the biggest change is stepping out of my little in-town bubble and out into the world as much as it is and just kind of noticing how insecure I really am about certain beliefs.... I'd go to work and some of my friends/coworkers wouldn't be Mormon, would ask me why you want to go somewhere completely different. The first thing that would pop into my mind was because I was told to since I was eight, but I never really realized it. And now that I do, it's 'cause I want to. I've finally realized the Spirit and how much it helps. I want to show that to other people and share that with other people.... It sounds

like I don't really know what I am doing and that's what made me decide to kind of get going....

Eric: Alright.... This is from President Hinckley. [This quote was passed out on a handout.] Can I get somebody to read this?

Andrew: I go it. "I hope that [scripture study] will become something more enjoyable than a duty; that, rather, it will become a love affair with the word of God. I promise you that as you read, your minds will be enlightened and your spirits will be lifted. At first it may seem tedious, but that will change into a wondrous experience with thoughts and words of things divine."

Adam: That's true. [Laughter.]

Aaron: Imagine that.... He's a prophet. [Laughter.]

Eric: What do you think President Hinckley means by "love affair?"

Aaron: You love it and you want to devote all your time to it. It's just kind of, "Oh, I've gotta read the scriptures.".... That anticipation and anxiousness.... We've all loved someone or something and its something you want to make a part of your life in almost anyway you can, and...more like a secret thing. You don't want everyone to know, you just keep it to yourself, you really enjoy it; you really love it. You make it a part of your life.

Alex: I think that when you have a love affair, you want to be with that person as much as possible.... And the love affair aspect of the scriptures is you want to spend as much time in the scriptures 'cause you love it so much, because that desire is there....

Abe: I think by saying love affair, it puts it at a higher level than just a hobby or sport or something you enjoy doing. It's something that almost consumes your life that you want to seek after.

Aaron: My roommate has this quote on his wall. I just really like it. It's more enjoyable than a duty. It's interesting that it says it may at first seem tedious it probably does at first.

Adam: It does.

Eric: So how do we get to that level—that "love affair" level of the scriptures?

Aaron: Being obedient to the point at first.... It develops and it happens where you are being obedient and...then you miss a day or two and you're like something's different. What am I doing different? Why haven't I been reading the scriptures? That's kind of weird. It's a realization that slowly comes on. I think a lot of times you have the Spirit and you...want to read the scriptures. Not necessarily all the time, but like, you'll be

reading the scriptures and sometimes you can't help it, but like, I don't want to stop. You're just going to read for like a half hour and you realize it's already been a half hour. There are times you're looking at the clock waiting for the half hour to go by and there are times you're like "Holy cow!" and your writing and just flipping pages and you're writing and it's just flowing. It's those times...you really understand the scriptures. This is a big deal, this is serious stuff.... I think you hold onto that. It might not be like that every time, but you hold onto that.

Andrew: I kind of compare it to playing golf. I'm not very good, but I'll tell you what, there's those good shots that keep you coming back. Scripture study can be tedious and there are times that you are looking at the clock and thinking this is going pretty slow. But then there are times that it flows and things come to you and it makes sense. That keeps me coming back.

Eric: Do you have any questions or anything that is difficult or confusing about scripture study? Any additional information you would want about scripture study?

Andrew: I think that's the toughest question we've had.

Aaron: I think any questions we do have...you learn by experimenting with reading the scriptures and experiencing for yourself.... You can say, I don't understand Isaiah. But I'll tell you, there was this one random time I did. I was reading it, and it made perfect sense. I don't remember it now...but I think there's a lot of aid out there in scripture study and scriptures. It's good to use *True to the Faith* and all the talks from the Brethren in General Conference. You can also buy the scriptural reference books, which are helpful, too.

Andrew: *Preach my Gospel* is a good one. Obviously we'll be studying it everyday for the next two years, but I mean if you really take the time and study it. It gives you a lot of ideas and will help you. I'm not even close to getting through it, but the times I do go through it, it is very helpful and brings a lot out.

Adam: Study *Preach my Gospel* along with scriptures.... My Book of Mormon class requires us to read commentary.... That for me has been really cool, 'cause I haven't done that before. It opens your mind.... I don't know what scripture techniques I don't know, so I don't know exactly what I'm missing out on.... When you have those teachers or people who have an impact on you, it just opens up a new world.

Overview and Contributions of Focus Group A. Throughout an open and enjoyable conversation, this focus group uncovered solid data and produced fascinating dialogue. These participants addressed multiple topics of relevance, identified numerous blessings of scripture study, and provided insightful statements.

First, they addressed several valuable issues. The informants detailed many methods they used to make scripture study effective, which included going in with a question, keeping a scripture journal, making the study intense, praying in connection with the study, reading in the mornings, studying for an amount of time, pondering, and making it consistent. They often mentioned the Spirit and the necessity of it. They also spoke repeatedly about seeing scripture study as more than a duty or chore in order to make it meaningful. Similarly, they demonstrated a belief in and desire for their scripture study to be personal and connect them to God. This group also offered a great deal of counsel regarding personal agency. They made various statements that essentially said, “You have to learn for yourself.” Additionally, they addressed the issue of learning *how* to study effectively, and included suggestions of how to assist high school students. Also, consistent with the interview participants, the members of this focus group did not have meaningful or frequent scripture study during their high school years. Yet, it appeared they had made considerable improvements during the current year prior to their mission.

Next, this group identified several blessings from scripture study. The following is a list of the blessings they mentioned:

- Receive insights
- Things come that don't relate to scriptures
- Strengthened testimony
- Day goes better
- Receive Spirit
- Overall confidence
- Specific direction
- Firmer trust in God's will for you
- Help to resist temptations and keep away from sin
- Open mind
- School day goes better
- Help to put on Armor of God and be protected
- Feeling of accomplishment
- Scripture passages come to mind later

- Easier to answer questions
- Understand purposes for being on earth
- Help to prepare for mission
- It's an anchor
- Change life for better
- Can find exactly what you're looking for and need to hear
- Receive revelation
- Huge spiritual feeling
- Get you charged up for the day
- Help your mindset
- Personal growth
- Can avoid pain and heartache
- Peaceful feeling

Finally, these informants offered singular statements, which are worthy of emphasis. These quotations were sharp, perceptive, and informative. The following is a collection of these types of statements:

- "I myself had to have a testimony of it before I really started to get things out of it" (Aaron).
- "Certain scriptures might stick out at you at a certain time, and then they might go dormant in your mind for a while. And then, just, occasionally when you need them, they'll pop back up and they'll be just the right thing to say to someone, or something else. It's almost like they were just implanted there for a reason later" (Abe).
- "We're reading; we're not talking. But the words are speaking to us" (Andrew).
- "As I started to see those blessings in my life from reading the scriptures, the desire to read the scriptures...increased also. You know, it turns out to be like, you *want* to read your scriptures everyday, not that you *have* to read your scriptures" (Alex).
- "My problem was, I always thought I was too busy with school and sports and all that stuff. I never thought I had time to. And now I get to college, and I've got even less time.... I just wish I would have realized it a whole lot sooner" (Alan).
- "I totally regret not reading my scriptures. I didn't know what I was doing, you know. It didn't mean anything to me, because I didn't really care. But now looking back, it's like I had this valuable tool that I just wasn't taking advantage of, you know. I just, uhh! I regret it" (Adam).
- "I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't read the scriptures enough this past year, I don't know what experiences I would rely on to be able to share my testimony or if I even have a strong testimony enough to do it... It's really an essential thing if you are going on a mission to be able to do that. I think that's the problem, why they are raising the bar, is a lot of kids just went

and didn't have those firm testimonies, and they would gain it eventually...but you lose a lot of time on your mission and a lot of potential there, so you got to raise the bar" (Aaron).

- "In high school, I don't think I knew how to study the scriptures properly. Like I used to just read it through, just like flipping through pages. I never even thought of studying topically back in high school.... And also the concept of...starting with a prayer, in high school that didn't even cross my mind. It's really helped when you've learned properly how to study the scriptures" (Abe).

In summary, this focus group offered a lively setting and produced rich detail, which was pertinent to the research question. These informants made significant and noteworthy contributions to the data. Collectively, the participants spoke extensively about agency, high school, motivations to study, effective methods, and subsequent blessings.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The call to “raise the bar” accompanied the introduction of *Preach My Gospel*, which emphasized effective personal scripture study. This background laid the foundation for this research. Accordingly, this study began with an exploratory focus, seeking to discover the nature of personal scripture study among prospective missionaries. The aim of this study was to find descriptive data that would be useful to parents, trainers, leaders, and future researchers in helping prospective missionaries to improve their personal scripture study. The literature review showed that relatively little social research existed to determine the actual level of scripture study among prospective missionaries.

Therefore, recognizing the exploratory need in this area for introductory level research, this study chose a qualitative research design. This style of research allowed for in-depth investigation with the potential to produce a baseline of data for future researchers. This study used repeated interviews with six informants. Eleven other participants comprised two focus groups. The methods of data collection and analysis included several techniques to enhance credibility and transferability of these findings. Essentially, the success of this study depended on how trustworthy and useful the findings would be to the reader. Consequently, this study reported results with rich

description. Similarly, the conclusions presented in this chapter involve ample use of evidence and quotations from the body of narrative data.

## Conclusions

This study derived conclusions from a sequence of analytical techniques (explained in chapter 3) and followed the constant comparative method. To summarize this process, interview and focus group transcripts were reviewed for units of data and assigned terms, such as, “Effective Methods” or “Agency”. Then, these terms were categorized. As all the data were reviewed and the list of terms and categories was refined, emergent themes and conclusions could then be lifted from the data. In other words, new data was constantly compared with the existing body of data. This perpetual cross-case analysis provided order and prompted discovery. The following conclusions reveal common themes across the data record and are summarized below:

1. They have, in fact, learned from parents, teachers, and leaders.
2. Scripture study in high school is infrequent and less effective.
3. The mission is a significant motivator to study effectively. They all believe developing effective scripture study is essential for missionary success.
4. Their scripture study improved in the year prior to their mission.
5. Scripture study among prospective missionaries can be inconsistent and erratic.
6. Some view scripture study as merely a means to get knowledge, rather than an instrument for drawing closer to God.
7. Personal experience is the primary reason they know scripture study is the right thing to do.
8. They all see blessings from scripture study.
9. Reading scriptures as a duty, a chore, or a to-do item is less effective scripture study.
10. Reading scriptures for an extrinsic reward is less-effective scripture study and may be harmful to the individual’s valuation of scripture study.
11. Certain methods appear extremely effective.
12. Various factors account for real improvement.
13. Responding to the questions of this research exposes reality.
14. Agency is critical to effective scripture study.
15. Structure is critical to effective scripture study.
16. Knowledge, belief, and education are critical to effective scripture study.

They have, in fact, learned from parents, teachers, and leaders.

All informants were able to speak on various things they learned from others throughout their life, ranging from Primary to their current institute/religion class. For example, they all had been taught and believed reading the scriptures was the right thing to do. They also learned the scriptures are the word of God, revelation can be received through the scriptures, effective scripture study involves sincere effort, and missionary success depends on effective scripture study. These teachings were commonly and readily accepted among these participants.

Todd mentioned family, Church, seminary, and articles in the *Ensign* as influences that prompted him to want to study his scriptures. Jeff identified learning from his ward, his father, and institute class. The focus group participants spoke of Church, seminary, EFY, BYU religion classes, UVSC Institute classes and examples of others as sources of instruction. Mark indicated he was more likely to study his scriptures on the days he went to Institute, because of the inspiration and instruction he received there.

Scripture study in high school is infrequent and less effective.

None of the informants, whether in the interviews or in the focus groups, claimed consistent or meaningful personal scripture study while in high school. Jeff didn't begin to study the scripture seriously or consistently until after high school. He explained he never took the time to really study scriptures. Chad admitted he "didn't read very much just by (him)self" until President Hinckley's challenge. He recollected, "During high school I was pretty busy—gone most of the day. And, like with homework and everything, I just didn't even bother reading everyday." Alan and Aaron revealed similar issues with their priorities. Alan stated, "My problem was, I always thought I was too

busy with school and sports and all that stuff. I never thought I had time to.” Aaron admitted, “I just never gave it a chance...when I was younger. Other things interested me more.”

In Todd’s case, he had several failed attempts to complete reading the Book of Mormon in high school. Also, he intended to begin reading each new seminary year, yet never incorporated consistent reading into his schedule. He stated, “I really wish that I had found a schedule that really did work, that I could read everyday. ‘Cause I knew I was supposed to read everyday, but that doesn’t mean I always did it.... I wish I had developed the willpower.” He said he was very busy in high school and scripture reading would generally be pushed to the end of the day, if it happened at all. He also stated he wasn’t motivated to read the scriptures in high school and didn’t have a love for them. Due to his infrequent and impersonal approach to the scriptures, he didn’t appear to experience very many blessings from scripture reading in high school, which was a common deficiency among all other participants of this research.

The focus group participants offered several statements to clearly explain their low frequency and poor quality of scripture study in high school, which include the following:

- “I totally regret not reading my scriptures” (Adam).
- “In high school, I don’t think I knew how to study the scriptures properly. I used to just read it through, just like flipping through pages” (Abe).
- “It was hard for me to understand the importance of reading the scriptures when I was in high school” (Alex).
- “I didn’t study well at all the scriptures in high school. I would try to read, but I would always zone out, and I wouldn’t get anything out of it” (Ben).
- “In high school...I thought reading the scriptures was one of the most boring things created unto mankind” (Brandon).

This research plainly showed personal scripture study was infrequent and less effective during the high school years of these participants. This finding coincides with data reported in the review of literature about poor scripture study in high school.

The mission is a significant motivator to study effectively.

According to these informants, their mission was a significant motivator to begin studying their scriptures well. They all believe effective scripture study is necessary to be a successful missionary. Consequently, there appeared to be a certain motivation to become proficient at scripture study. This urgency intensified in the year prior to their mission.

Both focus groups offered multiple statements about the mission's motivating element. Brent said, "I'm just realizing how important it is, especially now I'm going on a mission, this stuff is really important." Likewise, Ben reported, "Another reason I changed my scripture study is I thought about my mission, and I was like well—it really was...fear—I'm not ready yet. I really don't know that book well enough to teach people out of it." That was another motivating factor." Brad added, "I just really wanted to [start studying in depth] 'cause I'm getting ready for my mission." Todd acknowledged, "One of the main reasons...that I'm now realizing how much I wished I studied the scriptures is because the mission is coming up." All informants believed a strong knowledge of the scriptures was critical to missionary success.

Some also commented on the need for greater spirituality in order to be a successful missionary. Brad addressed this aspect: "I just wanted to start feeling the Spirit more often. Especially 'cause I've been working on my papers and I'm gonna have to get in the regimen of studying the scriptures, 'cause that's what you do all the time. You

study the scriptures with your companion; you study with yourself; you study at night; you study in the day. Not just doing it for the habit, but it...changed because I felt like it had to change because I wasn't feeling the Spirit as often." Aaron concluded, "A mission just puts things into perspective. You say you've been preparing your whole life and you think, 'Do I really have 19 years of preparation going in here?' ... You think, 'I've got to have a firm testimony of this if I'm gonna be preaching it.'" Clearly, whether for knowledge, testimony, or the expected routine of a missionary, most participants directly identified the mission as a primary factor for wanting to improve their scripture study.

Their scripture study improved in the year prior to their mission.

Much of this conclusion can be attributed to the preceding conclusion—the urgency of the mission. However, the data record identified other motivating factors, which resulted in improved scripture study. The informants recognized the following additional items: President Hinckley's challenge, personal maturity, and education about scripture study.

President Hinckley's challenge promoted better scripture study. This goal prompted Todd to read more in the Book of Mormon than he ever had accomplished previously. Nick said as he fulfilled the challenge it was the first time he had ever been "engaged" in scripture reading. Chad noted several improvements from reading the Book of Mormon. He stated, "I gained more insight on what I was reading. I just felt happier, you know. I had the Spirit throughout the day, just more than I ever had before—a really noticeable difference." Additionally, Jeff and his father had an extremely noteworthy and touching experience while completing President Hinckley's challenge. He summarized, "It was incredible. That was the first time my family and I had read the Book of

Mormon...since I was a little kid.” He also noted, “The prophet’s challenge just really helped us to shape up.” This challenge was timely for these prospective missionaries and contributed to their desires to have effective scripture study.

In addition to the motivation of the mission and President Hinckley’s challenge, personal maturity also appeared to account for improved scripture study in the year before their mission. Todd and Jeff both referred to their immaturity when commenting on why they didn’t take scripture reading more seriously in high school. Following high school, Jeff made a personal decision to study his scriptures. He recalled, “The summer after I graduated, I tried to read everyday and tried to keep that spirit in my life that I found in seminary.... Since having taken that [scripture study] so seriously, I felt an abundance of spirit.... It made my life...easier and helped me realize how important the scriptures are and how relevant the gospel is to your life.” Bobby recalled, “I just remember one night I was falling asleep [reading the scriptures], and I...thought to myself, ‘I have to change this. I’m not getting nearly enough out of the scriptures as I should be getting.’ I think it’s amazing, the next day when I started studying, I read it the next morning, and I got so much more out of it than I did the previous night. It was amazing.” Several informants remarked on the personal, independent choices they made to have better scripture study.

Furthermore, they noted how studying the scriptures was both more serious and more enjoyable than it was in high school. When asked what he wished he knew in high school about scripture study, Jeff quickly answered, “That it’s fun; that you can get a lot out of scripture study.” Ben’s response to the same question was almost identical. He said, “I think I wish I would have known how good it was, and how fun it could be, too.”

Chad recognized, “When I started doing it everyday, I noticed a change, and I really enjoyed reading the scriptures each day.” Alex reflected, “I think that if I had been studying the scriptures back in high school like I do now, where would I be right now, you know, spiritually speaking? And so, you can’t really regret what you’ve done, but...I wonder where I’d be right now if I had spent that time reading scriptures instead of doing other things.” Most informants commented on searching in the scriptures more now than in high school and trying to learn from the scriptures. Also, many participants mentioned techniques of scripture study they had never tried until college, such as praying, pondering, keeping a scripture journal, reading topically, and reading in the mornings.

For Aaron this year was essential to his mission preparation:

I’m realizing, you know, that most of...what I’ll use on my mission and most of the experiences I’ll have or personal experiences I’ll testify of to investigators, to the people, will come during that time that I actually spent reading the scriptures. ‘Cause that’s when I had the Spirit most often and that’s when I had those experiences most often.... I don’t know what I would have done if I hadn’t read the scriptures enough this past year. I don’t know what experiences I would rely on to be able to share my testimony, or if I even have a strong testimony enough to do it.

For some participants (specifically, Chad, Ben, Aaron, Brad, Abe, and Brandon), BYU religion or UVSC Institute classes sparked changes in their personal scripture study. Although, this factor was not present for all the participants, it was noteworthy for some. The grading requirement appeared very effective for Chad, Ben, and Aaron (though not so for Todd). Also, education and counsel to pray and write with scripture study positively affected their quality of study. Brandon said he was inspired by his Institute teachers to improve his scripture study. He recognized, “It was the teachers who really helped me...skyrocket in scripture study and they’re the ones who really helped me out.” These respondents clearly had a better attitude and utilized more effective

techniques than they had in high school. Their upcoming mission, the prophetic challenge, personal decisions, and education all appeared to make a noticeable impact.

Scripture study among prospective missionaries can be inconsistent and erratic.

All participants wanted to be effective scripture studiers. All were making efforts to improve or establish scripture study in their lives. However, in most cases consistency was not maintained and routines were unpredictable. Todd acknowledged long periods of not reading and short spurts to get it into a habit. Todd's scripture reading even fluctuated during the interviews. At times it was very low (one to two times per week). By the end of the interviews he had only missed a few days of reading over a two-week time period. Chad went from not reading at all to reading everyday during President Hinckley's challenge. He then reverted to not reading, but started a daily routine again with his BYU religion class. Jeff also read well during President Hinckley's challenge and, likewise, dropped in frequency afterwards. Yet, he improved during the interviews. Mark's routine appeared to be the most erratic. In the first interview, he reported reading one to two times per week, but had been reading five to six times per week the month previous. Two weeks later, he remarked in the second interview that he hadn't read at all since we had talked last. However, in last interview, he updated he had started reading everyday. Many informants described their scripture study as "off and on."

Some view scripture study as merely a means to get knowledge, rather than an instrument for drawing closer to God.

Some participants appeared to approach scripture study for the purpose of indirect blessings—treating the scriptures like medicine rather than food. For example, Todd

noted the need for the Spirit to have effective scripture study, and recognized scripture study could make him more receptive to spiritual promptings. Yet, unless he was in trouble or had a specific need, he did not seek the Spirit or even pray in connection with his scripture study. As specified in his story, he appeared to seek blessings *from* his scripture study, but not *in* his scripture study. He felt he needed to have a strong knowledge of the scriptures to be a successful missionary, but offered little information about using his scripture study to increase his own spirituality. This attitude can be contrasted with Jeff's approach toward the scriptures. Jeff believed the scriptures could edify him and viewed them as sacred. When asked what he ultimately hoped to gain from scripture study, he commented, "I hope that eventually after years of reading and studying the scriptures that I'd feel qualified to be nearer to God, to be closer to God." Chad, on the other hand, responded to the same question by referring to knowledge and testimony, and failed to mention anything about communing with God. And, like Chad, Mark appeared to receive many internal blessings from his scriptures study, yet seemed to focus more on the knowledge purposes of scripture study.

The available data produced by this research seemed to indicate some prospective missionaries underestimated the opportunity scripture study provides to commune with God, even after recognizing it blessed them spiritually. Instead, they focused more on its role as a source of knowledge.

Personal experience is the primary reason they know scripture study is the right thing to do.

They all emphatically believed it was a commandment to study the scriptures. They all reported they had been taught they should read their scriptures "since Primary."

However, this acknowledgement was always followed with stronger statements of personal experience. For example, when Alex recognized blessings from his scripture study, he found himself *wanting* to read everyday, rather *having* to read. Brad instructed, “A million people could tell you [the blessings of scripture study],” but, he said, you won’t know “unless you really do it.” Aaron said scripture reading started “through being obedient at first,” but then offered how it continued. He stated, “It’s something you...hold on to after that because of blessings and personal experience.” Adam following that statement with his own personal experience:

I hadn’t always been really active in scripture reading before, and then um, I had kind of been doing some bad things. But then like, you know, for the longest time I really wanted to like change myself and just change my life and then, you know, you’ve always heard, “Read your scriptures.” And I’m, “Oh...whatever.” And then, so, one day I just decided to try it, and then things just started happening. It was just amazing. My life totally changed. And ever since then it’s, “You need to read you scriptures. It’s good. It changes your life.” That’s how I learned for myself.

Mark said scripture study had “the right feeling about it,” which helped him know he should read the scriptures. Jeff also said the “feeling” the scriptures gave him convinced him to read them everyday. He realized “how important the scriptures are” after deciding to study on his own after high school. He also commented about his belief that the scriptures should be read with the Spirit. When asked where that belief came from, he said, “Through experience.” Todd specifically mentioned counsel and instruction from Church leaders about studying the scriptures, but said, “Overall, personal experience helped the most.” Alex concluded, “You grow up in the Church, and you know all these things, but you’ve really got to get your testimony for yourself. That’s what got me reading the scriptures more.” Nick concluded, “The only way to know it’s good to read, for yourself, is actually doing it yourself.”

Basically, all participants had been taught they should read the scriptures. However, this background detail seemed to always be followed with an emphasis on personal experience. Evidently (and naturally), independent involvement with the scriptures has greater convincing power than instruction.

They all see blessings from scripture study.

Collectively, these informants identified numerous blessings they had experienced from personal scripture study. Every participant—from the interviews and focus groups, and regardless of frequency of reading—contributed to the accumulated list of positive results of scripture study.<sup>1</sup> For the most part, they mentioned blessings that were realized during the current year, because they had generally improved their scripture study in the year prior to their mission.

Todd utilized the scriptures for help when stressed or faced with a difficult challenge. He also noted that his days went better and seemed more “productive” when he read the scriptures. Chad commented, “When I read the scriptures, I’m more patient with people I think. It affects me emotionally.... It also helps me to love people better.” Jeff’s case included a touching experience with his father and how their scripture study improved their relationship. He also said scripture study made his life easier, happier, more positive, more confident, and more “buoyant.” Others noted how the scriptures positively influence their day, their school work, their thoughts, and their individual confidence.

Some informants identified how scripture study influenced their ability to recognize spiritual communication. Chad said, “Most often, the time that I received

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix K for a complete list of identified blessings reported in this research.

personal revelation is while reading the scriptures so, you know, if I expect to receive answers to things, to questions, it will be during my scripture study.” He added, “It’s also helped to have the Spirit throughout the day.... I’ve learned more about how to feel the Spirit, how to discern what the Spirit is, and I think that’s really helped a lot. It’s helped answer a lot of questions I have.” Brent identified the deep, spiritual impact the Book of Mormon made on his life. He said, “I’m also more spiritually in tune. I recognize spiritual promptings a lot easier now. Before it was like a guessing game for me. But now, I’m able to make a lot more decisions based on promptings by the Spirit instead of just on my own. Just reading the Book of Mormon always helps me know when the Spirit is trying to tell me something, and helped me in life too, to make lots of changes.” Other participants also noted how scripture study invited personal revelation. Abe explained, “Certain scriptures might stick out at you at a certain time, and then they might go dormant in your mind for a while. And then, just, occasionally when you need them, they’ll pop back up and they’ll be just the right thing to say to someone, or something else. It’s almost like they were just implanted there for a reason later.” Several others mentioned the scriptures offered personal direction, spiritual protection, insights received “between the lines,” and “hidden treasures.” Brad remarked, “That’s why the Book of Mormon is so great ‘cause it helps you at whatever point you are in your life. It has an answer right there to every question.” He also taught that time in scripture study is “like having a conversation with God.”

Some, such as Chad and Adam, candidly declared that scripture study had changed their lives. Chad said, “If I knew how it would have changed my life reading it everyday, I’m sure I would have [read the scriptures sooner in life].” Adam expressed,

“For the longest time I really wanted...to change myself and just change my life. And then, you know, you’ve always heard, ‘Read your scriptures.’ ... So, one day I just decided to try it, and then things just started happening. It was just amazing. My life totally changed.” Most participants were able to attest of the power of the scriptures to alter and enhance their lives. As a group, these participants were only moderately consistent with scripture study and had only recently begun to apply effective techniques. However, they all had sufficient experience to identify and recognize abundant blessings from personal scripture study.

Reading scriptures as a duty, a chore, or a to-do item is less effective scripture study.

These participants used the terms “duty,” “chore,” and “to-do item” to describe scripture study that lacked meaning and did not lead to the potential blessings of effective scripture study. Brandon expressed this manner of study as “speed reading” and “plowing through the scriptures.” Alan referred to it as “reading to go through it.” He also later advised, “Don’t read it ‘cause you have to.” Adam (who admitted the only reason he read in high school was because his mom was the seminary teacher) suggested helping high school students to “get them so that they want to do it,” and to not view scripture study as “a chore.” The participants in Focus Group A appeared to collectively agree on the necessity of both willingness and focus as important elements of effective scriptures study.

Jeff said scripture reading lacked power if it was done as just a “duty or a responsibility.” Similarly, Todd felt reading the scriptures as a “chore” was not an effective way to study. Nick believed if scripture study was seen as a “to-do item,” then it was insincere. He remarked, “I know for myself, when I go into scripture reading with a

better attitude and not seeing it as duty, you get into it.” Nick, who reported consistent scripture study at the time of the interviews, also spoke of the flexibility offered by his parents. He recalled, “What I really liked about it is they never...approached [scripture study] as an assignment.” He noted his parents were good examples of doing scripture study, and they encouraged him, but always made it his choice. These respondents consistently asserted that a personal, willing, sincere attitude was a necessary part of effective scripture study.

Alex, Aaron, Adam, Chad, and Todd all made comments that expressed it was still an “accomplishment” to read even if it was out of duty. For example, Aaron said, “At least at the end of the day you can always say, ‘Well, at least I read my scriptures.’” Yet, they plainly viewed reading as a “duty” or “chore” as a lower quality of scripture study—unable to produce the expected blessings. Alex summarized, “You had to read your scriptures for seminary or whatever, and I’d just open up the scriptures, and I still find myself doing this every once in a while, and just kind of reading the words and not even paying attention and not even understanding.” He recommended, “My advice would be...understand the importance of having meaningful scripture study. If you’re going to be reading the scriptures, why not try to get something out of it.” These informants manifestly agreed scripture reading out of obligation lacks purpose and does not represent meaningful scripture study. This conclusion is similar to Top and Chadwick’s finding (noted in the review of literature), which determined that internalization with religious activities was necessary for effective results.

Reading scriptures for an extrinsic reward is less effective scripture study and may be harmful to the individual's valuation of scripture study.

Todd read for extrinsic rewards in high school, and admitted he would even lie about his reading in order to receive those rewards. Todd's motive and manner of study wasn't conducive to receiving blessings. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why he felt unmotivated to study his scriptures in high school. He would read on occasion, but the only blessings he saw from reading were extrinsic rewards. When required as part of his grade for a BYU religion class, Todd said he viewed his study as homework and, consequently, was unenthusiastic about doing it. Jeff implied that "forced" efforts to make someone love the scripture would have been seen as "trivial or insincere."

Nick commented the requirement to read for a grade in seminary gave him a negative attitude about scripture reading. He remarked, "I think in Seminary...just the whole, *Did you read today?*, and that's half your grade or whatever. Um, I took that as kind of an assignment—something I have to do. And so, I definitely went into scripture reading with a totally wrong attitude, rather than wanting to read to get something out of it." While some participants, such as Chad, Aaron, Ben, and Brad, did respond well to the imposed structure of a grading requirement at BYU, they also acknowledged their pre-existing personal desire to have effective scripture study. Aaron pointed out, "I myself had to have a testimony of it before I really started to get things out of it." Ben stated, "Definitely a big part of [trying to improve scripture study] was the grade. I'm not gonna lie and say it wasn't. I'm glad I did. I really *wanted* to, but this is something that *makes* you, and you need to for your grade. I'm in a Book of Mormon class and that's a big part

of it. I really wanted to get better scripture study, but I didn't know if I had as good of a discipline as I thought I did. But it got me to, so I'm happy for it."

This data seemed to suggest extrinsic rewards were only positive for those who already desired assistance to progress toward effective scripture study. If they didn't want to progress or didn't want the assistance, then it created a negative attitude; or even a motivation to be dishonest. Such rewards appear to be, at best, a means to an end; and, at worst, a trivialization of the sacred nature of the Word. As reported in the literature, Harding also drew a similar conclusion.

Certain methods appeared to be extremely effective.

The data record revealed particular methods to be distinctly beneficial for these informants. They identified prayer, keeping a scripture journal, reading in the mornings, studying diligently, and establishing consistency as especially useful techniques.

Prayer. Alex said he prays "to have the Spirit witness of the truthfulness" of what he is reading. He also noted that prayer "opens the Spirit from the very beginning." Alan added praying makes reading easier and allows him to stay awake and maintain focus. Jeff said he prays in conjunction with his scripture study for understanding and spiritual vision. He stated, "I usually pray...so I can see the scriptures in a new light, and try to learn something new, or be able to apply it in new way." Failing to pray as part of his scripture study appeared to be the primary cause of Todd's impersonal, and therefore, ineffective study of the scriptures. In fact, he said the only times he prays with his scripture study is when searching for help or answer to a "major" problem or question. He identified these times as the "really spiritual study sessions." Aaron asserted prayer makes a deep impact on scripture study. He said, "That's something that didn't

really...hit me until I got here [to college] is you can put them together. You can open with a prayer, pray in between, and close with a prayer of thanks for the scriptures. That right there, I think, boosts you up to a whole different level of what kind of things you're going to be getting out of your scripture study."

Writing. In addition to being taught to pray with their scripture study, Chad and Aaron both reported they had learned through their BYU religion class to write about their study. Alex, Abe, and Bobby also said they kept a scripture journal. Abe said he looked for insights. Bobby clarified the difference writing had made on his scripture study. He stated, "I would say marking my scriptures and keeping a study journal...makes a big difference. And I didn't do that in high school, and I have been doing that here, and that's made a huge difference. I'm just looking to get things out of the scriptures." Aaron explained he keeps a journal to capture what the Spirit tells him during his study. He expressed, "I probably spend more time writing than I do actually reading. It's kind of the thoughts you get between the lines and the application that really...seals the deal for me."

Mornings. An earlier time of day also appeared to yield increased benefits from scripture study. Both Jeff and Todd recognized waiting to read the scriptures at night often left them no time to read, or created low-quality time. Jeff admitted, "Most times, with work it's really hard. I get home late, and I'm really tired. So, I usually just read a chapter or two. And that's still ok, but sometimes I miss those nights." He also offered advice for helping others when he said, "You have to set aside enough time in your day to not just feel like you have to hurry and quickly speed through the scriptures. That's

probably the first step...is being able to manage the time in your day to allow proper scripture study.”

Other informants similarly expressed an improvement by studying earlier in the day. Alex felt reading in the morning made his scripture study “more personal.” Abe related, “I used to read at night and then I tried switching it to the morning, and I found that I got a lot more out of it just by doing it in the morning.” Bobby told a similar story. He said, “I changed my scriptures study.... I used to study at night right before I got to bed, but I found that I...fall asleep, and I wasn’t as alert as I would like to have been. So, I changed it, and now I do it in the morning or in the day...when I’m more ready to learn. I’ve learned tons more, and I’ve gotten way more out of the scriptures.” Brad added, “I changed mine to more morning and afternoon... ‘cause I used to do it at night. There’s just a difference, a huge difference.”

Focus and sincerity. Naturally, participants credited diligent study and genuinely seeking to apply the scriptures as efficacious methods. Aaron said effective scripture study is “more than reading, you know, it is a study. And it does require prayer, and it does require...thinking and pondering.” Ben stated, “If you can pay attention the whole time and really get something out of it, then I’d say that’s effective.” Brandon elaborated, “When I’m not...looking at the clock and just...focusing in on the scriptures, that’s when I feel it’s effective, and when I dig deep. And not...just go over the stories, but kind of...read between the lines kind of thing.” Alex recognized seeking to apply the scriptures invites the Spirit.

Also, many mentioned a diligent, personal approach to scripture study as a contrast to reading out of duty or obligation. Brent explained, “Applying what you read to

your life as you are reading it, is really helpful. In high school, I just read it and it was like cool stuff, but now when I read it, I'm like, 'Oh, my gosh! It's awesome.'" Alex simply offered, "If you're going to be reading the scriptures, why not try to get something out of it." Adam implied going into each study "formally" was more effective than casual reading. He said, "If you start out with a prayer, you're like, 'I got to be serious about this. I can't just read it.'" Brad explained, "I had a testimony of the Book of Mormon. It's, just, I wanted to have the experience of studying it really in depth, and I did it. I cannot *not* study it this way anymore 'cause it's so much better than it was before."

Furthermore, several participants said they benefited by going into their study with a specific question. For example, Ben related, "The only time I really do get a good scripture study in is when I'm really excited to learn something...or have a question in mind.... That's the times when I get the most out of it."

Consistency. A consistent routine influenced the type of experience these participants had with their scripture study. Todd described, "I guess I'd miss it when I was reading it...but then the times when I wasn't reading it, I wouldn't really miss reading it." He also explained, "Like, once I come out of a period of not having read for a while, like the first time I read, you know, it's somewhat helpful, but it's still working back into it. But then after awhile, after a couple of days of consistent reading, it starts to.... Every time I read it becomes more helpful than the last time I read." Likewise, Jeff observed, "When I don't read when I don't feel like it, then I feel even less like reading it the next day, and even less like reading the next day. It's just kind of a downward cycle.... To kind of counter that...I've just tried to teach myself that it doesn't work that way." Andrew said, "If you've been away from it for so long, you really don't feel a

need. You're numb to the feelings that you have from reading the scriptures." Similarly, Brandon illustrated the effect of inconsistency. He described, "Once you have a spiritual experience in the Book of Mormon, especially...consecutively for a long time, and then you decide to relax and decide to do something else that you might would have done before, all of a sudden, it...shocks you. It's like...going outside in the sun and coming back inside with the artificial light. It's a big huge difference." Conversely, Brent explained the positive results of consistency. He said, "Once you've started going in depth...every night, it just keeps building and building." Consistency clearly led to better scripture study. This need for consistency was plainly established in the literature as well.

Additionally, these participants brought up several others techniques that improved their scripture study. They mentioned the following: reading for time versus and amount of pages or chapters, staying focused on the study, marking, pondering, and being reverent.

#### Various factors accounted for noticeable improvement.

The data record revealed specific factors that directly promoted better scripture study. The research participants stated the following: President Hinckley's challenge, their mission, training and education about scripture study, recognizing a need and making a personal decision to improve their scripture study, and experiencing blessings from scripture study.

President Hinckley's challenge. President Hinckley's challenge had a definite impact on all the interview participants. Apparently, the structure of the deadline, their testimony that President Hinckley is a prophet, and their desire to improve their scripture study all united to produce positive results and greater progress than ever before.

The mission. The reality of their mission appeared to strongly influence these prospective missionaries to improve their scripture study. Most informants appeared to actively respond to this urgency.

Education. Training about specific skills, such as praying and writing, appeared to dramatically alter the effectiveness of scripture study. Also, a grading requirement seemed to assist some of the informants to get into a consistent routine.<sup>2</sup>

Personal choice to change/Recognizing a need. Whenever an informant made a personal, independent choice to study the scriptures, there always followed immediate blessings. After high school, Jeff made a personal decision to study the scriptures. This independent choice appeared to alter his entire perspective and dramatically improved his scripture study. Adam related a choice to change and recognized an “amazing” result. Bobby determined to improve the quality of his scripture study and noticed distinct progress the very next day.

Also, Ben, Brad, Brent, Abe, Alex, Alan, and Aaron all related independent decisions to improve their scripture study due to the desire to be prepared for their mission. For example, Brad said, “I just really wanted to [improve scripture study], ‘cause I’m getting ready for my mission.” Also, Alan admitted, “It sounds like I don’t really know what I am doing, and that’s what made me decide to kind of get going.” Andrew recognized his duty to help build the kingdom of God, and therefore, recognized he needed “to get on the ball with [his] scripture study.” Brad declared, “[Scripture study] just changed because I felt like it had to change, because I wasn’t feeling the Spirit as often and so, when I did start doing it, it just made me want to do it more.”

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<sup>2</sup> This form of structure clearly helped some at the time of the interviews. However, it is unknown if the frequency of scripture reading continued without the grading requirement.

Seeing blessings. As individuals experienced personal blessings from their scripture study, they were more likely to do it consistently and meaningfully. For example, Alex realized, “As I started to see those blessings in my life from reading the scriptures, the desire to read the scriptures...increased also.”

The experiences of these informants showed particular items were distinctly helpful with the effort to improve scripture study. Challenges, goals, and training, as well as personal desires and experience appeared to foster noticeable improvement with their scripture study habits.

Responding to the questions of this research exposes reality.

Though not designed to intervene, this research created particular effects for some of the informants. For example, the interview process dramatically affected Todd’s awareness of his own scripture study. His honest, thoughtful responses appeared to reveal much to him about his motives and actions. At the close of the second interview, Todd seemed noticeably affected by our conversation. He recognized his testimony of the scriptures did not match his actions. He also said, “Knowing everything that we know about scripture study, it doesn’t even make sense that I don’t read everyday.” He also referred to reading his story as an “eye-opener.”

Also, Jeff took advantage of the indirect support offered by the interviews to improve his scripture reading. He explained, “I think it helps just to have somebody there to kind of ask questions.... It makes you really think about why you’re doing something, when somebody’s asking if you’re doing it or why you’re doing it. And it kind of helps you realize the importance of scripture reading.” Furthermore, Nick mentioned the

interviews had caused him to evaluate and improve his scripture reading. This research appeared to positively influence the participants.

As important as all of the preceding conclusions are, they actually serve as the foundation for the final three points made below. These conclusions emerged as the dominant findings of this research. They seemed to encompass all other conclusions.

Agency is critical to effective scripture study.

Agency, for the purposes of this research, is defined as possessing a personal desire to study the scriptures with real intent to come unto God. These participants repeatedly and emphatically addressed this matter as a fundamental quality for effective scripture study.

Jeff's individual decision to study after high school clearly improved his experience with the scriptures. He claimed the choice to study the scripture must be personal and cannot be forced. He said:

I don't think there's any one thing that can be forced on a high school student to make him appreciate or learn to love the scriptures. I think...through good examples...they can see the love that others have for the scriptures and try to find that love themselves.... In my rebellious case, at least, if somebody had really tried to take me through a class or a course that was designed to teach me or make me love the scriptures, I don't think I'd buy it, or I might see it as trivial or insincere.... In my case, I...had to figure it out by myself. And I did that by seeing the people around me and seeing their love for the scriptures and the gospel. And I wanted that—what I saw in them.

As previously reported in this chapter, independent choices to improve scripture study always led to meaningful scripture study. Adam, Brad, Jeff, and Bobby all shared vivid examples of experiencing effective scripture study after personally deciding to improve it.

Todd referred to making the necessary change to improve scripture study as “something that *I* need to do.” He said getting willpower and desire to read must be “self-motivated.” He also mentioned the maturity of the individual affects ability to study the scripture for better reasons than extrinsic rewards. He said, “You have to find it in yourself to really want to go read the scriptures. You have to develop the love for them.” Clearly, to him, a lack of love for the scriptures or reading for impersonal reasons did not produce meaningful scripture study. He repeatedly made attempts to study consistently, yet other things would always take a higher priority. Apparently, his agency determined priorities that denied time for scripture study. Adam, Ben, Brandon, Brent, Alan, Chad, and Alex also openly admitted scripture study was a low priority in high school.

The interviews and focus groups included the question, “What could be done to help high school students to study the scriptures better?” This question unleashed a flurry of responses about agency. Aaron acknowledged attempts could be made to help high school students, but warned, “They have to go into it willingly.” Alex said, “You could explain to me so many times, this and this and this will happen. But you don’t really comprehend that...until you go and actually do it.” Ben conceded, “It was something I had to chose for myself like people could tell me all the time it could be fun, but I’d be like, ‘Yeah, it could be, but I’d rather just play.’... A seminary teacher can be like really inspirational and inspire someone to make a change, but if they don’t want to, nothing can be done.” Brandon also counseled, “Every person is different. For some person, it doesn’t matter what kind of teacher you give to them, if they don’t want to do it, they don’t want to do it.” Adam simply stated, “You gotta find out for yourself.” Brandon similarly mentioned, “I just kind of had to do it on my own.” Aaron offered, “No one can

tell you that it works; you just have to learn it for yourself.” He later added, “It’s a change you have to initiate completely yourself, I think, to make it most effective and to make it work and last.... You had to try it. It’s not going to happen any other way.” These informants regularly commented how independently acting on personal desires preceded effective scripture study. Also, as previously reported, these respondents labeled reading for extrinsic reward or for duty as less effective scripture study. Evidently, motive matters.

Some informants reported the knowledge, training, and testimonies of others had inspired them to choose to make a change with their scripture reading. Others noted how they welcomed assistance from outside sources to make scripture study a habit. Yet, all appeared united on the issue that neither imposed structure nor quality education were sufficient to produce meaningful scripture study. Clearly, personal agency is a crucial component of effective scripture study.

#### Structure is critical to effective scripture study.

Structure, for the purposes of this conclusion, is defined as having a disciplined schedule to consistently allow time for scripture study. The data of this research clearly illustrated, by the lives of these informants, that structure is an essential component of effective scripture study. Good intentions, having a testimony, knowing how to study, and even prior positive experiences did not appear to have the power to successfully incorporate scripture study into the lives of these prospective missionaries. Apparently, they also had to have some form of structure.

Certainly, time with the scriptures is required for meaningful study. As already noted in this chapter, consistency strongly affected what was gained from scripture study.

Discipline, priorities, circumstances in life, support, and motivation all played a role in the amount of time each informant gave to the scriptures. For Todd, his testimony of the scriptures and intent to develop a routine were not enough. He never established a consistent pattern, but acknowledged the need for one. He blamed his poor reading in high school on failing to find a schedule that worked. He also said his reading through the summer and into college would have been easier if he had a solid habit. Also, more time did not lead to more study, because Todd read less frequently over the summer. He admitted his time in the summer lacked structure. He confessed, “It would make more sense that I would be reading, but I wasn’t. Because I had all this time, but that doesn’t always mean I was using it efficiently.” His poor scheduling also appeared to account for his failure to complete President Hinckley’s challenge. Furthermore, Todd made some progress after he responded to an invitation from his roommates to study in the morning, which is something Todd had never been successful at trying on his own. Apparently, this support appeared to have an immediate impact.

Jeff’s case is an even more convincing argument for structure. He had, perhaps, the most positive attitude toward the scriptures of any of the informants and appeared to have a deep understanding of the purposes of scripture study. He also had a very powerful experience with the Book of Mormon during President Hinckley’s challenge. Yet, in spite of this background, he still struggled to integrate scripture study into his schedule. When the structure of a deadline disappeared after President Hinckley’s challenge, his scripture routine vanished with it. He did, however, quickly respond to the minor form of structure provided by this research. During the second interview, he enthusiastically reported he had increased the frequency of his reading to everyday. He

said he “wanted to say that really bad in this interview,” and commented, “I think it helps just to have somebody there to...ask questions.... It makes you really think about why you’re doing something, when somebody’s asking if you’re doing it or why you’re doing it. And it kind of helps you realize the importance of scripture reading.... It just feels good to, first of all, do something that you know is right, but then to kind of have somebody there to help you along with it.” Jeff seemed to yearn for support.

Jeff also understood and openly acknowledged the need for structure. He advised, “I think a big part in teaching somebody...is you’d have to first...make sure that they had enough time to read.... You know, you have to set aside enough time in your day to not just feel like you have to hurry and quickly speed through the scriptures. That’s probably the first step...is being able to manage the time in your day to allow proper scripture study.” He concluded, “I just need to figure out something where I can read everyday.” Even though Jeff had strong desire and sound understanding, he lacked discipline. Consequently, he exhibited a poor scripture study routine.

Chad’s scenario also made a powerful assertion for structure. He studied while structure was in place for him, which came from the deadline of President Hinckley’s challenge and a grade requirement in his BYU religion class. However, he didn’t read at all without these forms of structure. While commenting on the grade requirement in his BYU religion class, Ben revealed, “I really wanted to get better scripture study, but I didn’t know if I had as good of a discipline as I thought I did. But [the grade requirement] got me to [improve scripture study], so I’m happy for it.” He also referred to his high school years, and recalled, “I wish I would have been disciplined.” Aaron and Brad also noted the positive impact of their BYU class.

Nick was the only participant in this research who reported consistent reading without an outward form of structure. He appeared to establish frequent and effective scripture reading on his own. He did note a strong family support system, and regular (but not forced) family reading while growing up. This background can be contrasted with Mark, who lacked family scripture reading in his youth. He flatly stated, “Getting scripture study into a habit—I can say...100 percent, that is the number one reason why I struggle now.” Todd also severely struggled to establish consistency with his scripture study, admitting a cyclical routine of being humbled by trials, returning to the scriptures, only to “slack off” when the trials had passed. He noted the similarity of his study habits and those of his family. He explained, “[Family scripture study] was kind of the same as my personal. We’d get into these periods where we’d have it, and then we’d kind of slack off. And then we’d hear the conference talk that we need to read as family, so you’d start up again. And then we’d slack off again.... It was really hard to have family scripture study, mainly because, just our schedules were crazy. We did family prayer ok, morning and night. And that’s because that’s quick; it doesn’t take 15 minutes.... It kind of went in a cycle.” The ability to individually incorporate structure and consistency with scripture study appeared to reflect the routine of family patterns.

Additionally, as already noted in this chapter, the mission provided an effective incentive to improve scripture study. This expected timeframe appeared to provide a certain form of structure.

According to these participants, structure came in the form of deadlines, challenges, grade requirements, personal goals, training, and support. Regardless of the form, the necessity to honor a disciplined routine emerged as a dominant finding of this

research. As reported in the literature, Williams also found “an established routine” to be vital to beneficial scripture study. Apparently, effective scripture study will not happen without structure.

Knowledge is critical to effective scripture study.

For this research, knowledge is defined as understanding the purposes of personal scripture study and knowing how to do it effectively, as well as having a testimony, or belief, regarding those purposes and procedures. Knowledge, belief, and understanding proved to be a notable factor required for effective scripture study.

All participants knew and believed they ought to study the scriptures. They acknowledged they had learned this principle repeatedly throughout their lives. This background appeared to preserve the intention to progress toward established scripture study. And, as reported, personal experience with the scriptures enhanced this knowledge. Without this basic understanding, it is likely these participants would not have attempted to improve their study. Also, as previously reported, many informants shared experiences of making a personal choice to begin to study effectively. They seemed to already know scripture study would improve their lives and help them have the Spirit more.

Additionally, knowledge about missionary expectations appeared to influence these informants. The mission was a definite catalyst for improved scripture study. This motivation was certainly founded on the belief (which all participants shared) that effective scripture study was necessary for missionary success.

Furthermore, high school scripture reading appeared to suffer because of poor knowledge about how to study the scriptures effectively. Aaron said about high school,

“It would have been nice, just to know how it works.” He also recalled, “I don’t think I truly understood what those words [“ponder the scripture prayerfully”] meant, and so I just didn’t do it.” Abe summarized, “In high school, I don’t think I knew how to study the scriptures properly. Like I used to just read it through, just like flipping through pages. I never even thought of studying topically back in high school.... And also the concept of...starting with a prayer, in high school that didn’t even cross my mind. It’s really helped when you’ve learned properly how to study the scriptures.”

Aaron and Chad appeared to be profoundly influenced by the instruction they received to pray and write in connection with their scripture study. Even though reading was required for a grade, they both noted how the methods they were taught to use increased the effectiveness of their study. Aaron said, “[The professor] made us keep track...for a grade, but he also said pray before...pray in between, pray after and do it for a half-hour and then you can check that off that you did it for the day.... It really got me into the habit of doing it and feeling the Spirit.”

Finally, some appeared to have a stronger understanding of the purposes of scripture study than others. For example, Jeff’s prayerful approach to the scriptures was distinctly different than Todd’s impersonal treatment. Jeff’s positive attitude toward the scriptures appeared to stem from his understanding of the purposes of scripture study. He even quoted Joseph Smith and President Spencer W. Kimball to explain how scripture study can draw individuals closer to God. Alex emphasized the need to “understand the importance of having meaningful scripture study.” Poor understanding and low education seemed to adversely affect Mark. He seemed unable to explain other purposes of scripture study, aside from knowing the doctrine better. Others, such as Ben and Andrew,

solidly viewed scripture study as a time to communicate with God. This understanding appeared to determine their reverent demeanor toward daily scripture study.

These respondents demonstrated the effects of possessing or lacking adequate knowledge, and thereby, substantiated this factor as an imperative part of effective scripture study. Deficiencies in knowledge seemed to stifle meaningful scripture study and thwart efforts to make it consistent. On the other hand, proper education appeared to position these participants for successful scripture study. Effective instruction also seemed to awaken and lead informants to further and greater experience with the Word of God. These findings about the need for education and training coincide with West's and Bothell's research reported in the literature.

### Summary

In review, the methods of analysis for this research revealed general themes of the data record. This chapter illustrated these conclusions with descriptive evidence and quotations from the participants. The findings involved various issues related to effective scripture study. Furthermore, these results pointed toward the idea that effective scripture study relied on the vital presence of agency, structure, and knowledge.

### Diagram

The lives and responses of these informants seemed to indicate agency, structure, and knowledge were the essential properties of meaningful scripture study. This concept (rooted in the data) began as a casual thought, formulated into a working hypothesis, and emerged as the dominant conclusion of this research.

During the second round of interviews, I wrote in my field notes, “Agency and structure are the key words of this study so far.” Through continued research, I recognized the place of knowledge and added it to this group of emergent themes. As seen below, I constructed the following diagram (Figure 1) to visually portray these overarching domains:

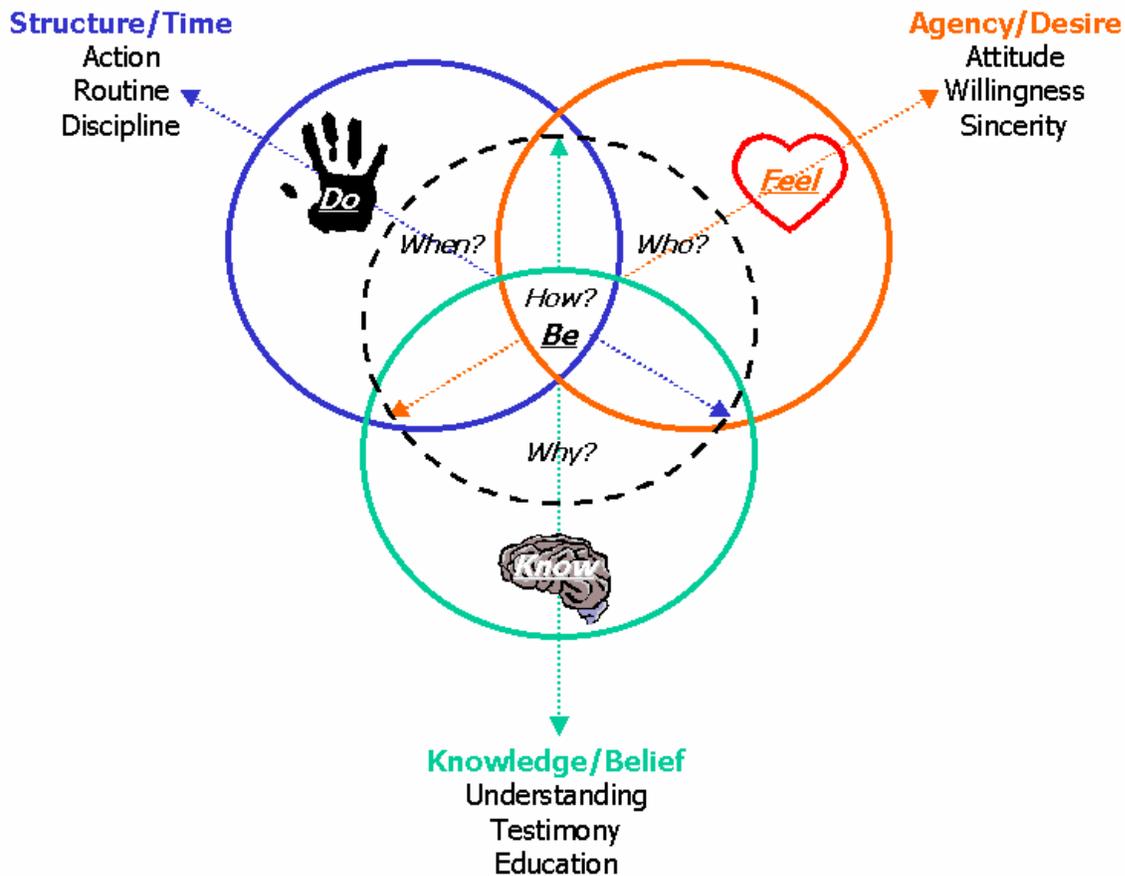


Figure 1. Diagram of primary conclusions.

I titled the components “Agency/Desire,” “Structure/Time,” and “Knowledge/Belief.” I listed additional terms below each title to help delineate these categories. For added clarity, this diagram illustrates each component with respective

symbols (*heart, hand, head*) and terms (*feel, do, know*). This display also includes questions (*Who?, When?, Why?*), which each segment appears to address vis-à-vis personal scripture study.<sup>3</sup>

Naturally, the central area signifies effective scripture study. This primary focus is also depicted with a term (*be*) and a question (*How?*). Thus, uniting all three components is *how* to study the scriptures effectively, which invites the necessary edification to become more Christ-like. The inner circle (identified with a dotted line) represents the prime place for each component. Ideally, all three components move inward and unite as one. Hence, arrowed lines designate paths of motion.

### Implications

The preceding conclusions offer certain insights related to the issue of assisting prospective missionaries to improve their scripture study. I have summarized the following implications of this research below:

1. Structure must be established.
2. Agency must be honored.
3. Prospective missionaries must be taught why and how to study effectively.
4. Several possibilities exist to improve scripture study among prospective missionaries.

#### Structure must be established.

Structure is essential to effective scripture study. Time and consistency with the scriptures proved to be crucial elements for a meaningful experience with the scriptures. The data record commonly referred to this point. Jeff's case presented a compelling argument for structure. Clearly, knowledge and agency together did not lead to effective

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<sup>3</sup> In other words, "Who is involved in personal scripture study?", "When will scripture study take place?", and "Why should personal scripture study be done?"

scripture study. Chad's scenario supported this finding, as experience with the scriptures seemed to come and go according to structure. Most of the informants significantly struggled to manage their time and schedules to allow for consistent scripture study. They all knew scripture study was the right thing to do, and therefore all had intentions to do better with their scripture study. They even believed effective scripture study was necessary for missionary success. Yet, these beliefs and desires were not enough to lift these participants to a frequent and meaningful study of the scriptures. They seemed to lack the discipline necessary to match their structure with their knowledge and agency. It appears since the "flesh is weak," that structure needs to be established.<sup>4</sup>

#### Agency must be honored.

As important as structure appears to be for improved scripture study, implementing structure without agency certainly does not produce effective scripture study and may be counterproductive. Informants viewed this impersonal manner of reading as frivolous and clearly noted how it failed to result in the blessings of effective scripture study. Thus, participants reading for extrinsic reward appeared to be frustrated, discouraged, or confused. They were doing what they had been told was scripture study, but were not experiencing the blessings associated with effective scripture study. This predicament is illustrated by the cases of Nick, Mark, and Todd. Reading for extrinsic reward seemed to be, at best, a hopeful means to an end—the end being effective scripture study. However, these outward motivations were, at worst, a trivialization of the sacred nature of the word of God. So, rather than being a means to an end, extrinsic motivation may lead individuals to a dead end.

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<sup>4</sup> See Matthew 26:41.

Basically, this research suggests the “personal” part of “personal scripture study” should never be subtracted. Otherwise, scripture reading only has the outward appearance of progress, yet lacks purpose and power, and produces no blessings. Consequently (and naturally), informants reading for this fruitless motive were less likely to continue reading, unless their motive changed by the inclusion of knowledge and agency. Evidently, the results of scripture study reflected the motive. The experiences of Aaron and Ben noted how the structure of a grade requirement only worked when personal desire already existed. Certainly, individual experience is a factor of successful scripture study. Sooner or later individuals must exercise their own agency and faith, and as Aaron said, “It’s a change you have to initiate completely yourself.” Apparently, without this personal, independent decision, effective scripture study will never happen. Thus, agency must always be honored.

Prospective missionaries must be taught why and how to study effectively.

These participants manifestly consented they knew they ought to study the scriptures, even during high school. However, they expressed a need to know why and how to study the scriptures. Abe directly addressed this necessity. Others, such as Mark and Todd, appeared to demonstrate a lack of understanding. In contrast, Aaron and Chad were profoundly impacted by education about how to study the scriptures. For all of these participants, their approach (which includes readiness, willingness, sincerity, and methodology) to the scriptures appeared to be based on their level of understanding. Church members may be underemphasizing instruction regarding why and how to study effectively.

Also, those respondents who saw their scripture study for the purpose of receiving divine communication seemed to gain more blessings from their time and effort. Without an understanding of scripture study, it appeared to be more about mentally learning, rather than spiritually feeling and experiencing. Clearly, true beliefs created a motive to study, but also seemed to unlock greater experience with the scriptures. These participants, especially during the year prior to their mission, appeared quite open to instruction about scripture study. Undoubtedly, these informants were presently and positively responding to knowledge, education, and training. Furthermore, this research indicates complete education about how to study the scriptures appears to include structure and agency.

Several possibilities exist to improve scripture study among prospective missionaries.

This data identified several possible ways to assist individuals to improve their scripture study. First, we (as parents, leaders, teachers, trainers, and individuals) can recognize the place of agency and motive in personal scripture study. We can teach that effective scripture study does not take place until the individual is studying the scriptures for personal reasons—with real intent to come unto God.<sup>5</sup> We must find a way to implement structure without intruding on agency. Second, we can influence structure in the form of teaching, support, recommendations, and example. Third, we can teach why and how to study the scriptures. Fourth, we can capitalize on the prospective missionaries' heightened motivation the year prior their mission. This research suggests prospective missionaries were considerably more motivated and more responsive to guidance and instruction as the time of their mission neared. These informants all viewed

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<sup>5</sup> See Nelson, "Scriptural Guidance," 16-18.

effective scripture study as necessary for missionary success. They may or may not have been open to help while in high school, but they definitely were in college. Fifth, we can teach sooner the effective components of scripture study, so prospective missionaries will know, even in high school, how to study “in the way that works”<sup>6</sup> Sixth, we can identify what element of effective scripture study is lacking (whether it be agency, structure, or knowledge) and act accordingly to assist them in the appropriate area. We can, at least, investigate and ask specific questions about their scripture study. Seventh, we can genuinely exemplify and model effective scripture study. Eighth, we can conduct more research about personal scripture study, including other populations and additional forms of data collection. Ninth, as suggested by the data of this study, we can acknowledge the need for all three components—agency, structure, and knowledge—in order to effectively study the word of God.

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<sup>6</sup> See Eyring, “Helping a Student,” 109.

## Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR  
HUMAN SUBJECTS



December 28, 2005

Eric Wing  
1363 S. 1400 E.  
Provo, UT 84606

Dear Eric,

Thank you for your recent correspondence concerning your protocol entitled "Prospective Missionaries' Personal Scripture Study Habits." The proposal has been assigned the following number: 05-0344. The research appears to pose minimal risk to human subjects and meets the Federal guidelines.

You are approved to begin your research. This approval is good until December 27, 2006 (a year from the date it was approved). A few months before this date we will send out a continuing review form. There will only be two reminders. Please fill this form out in a timely manner to ensure that there is not a lapse in your approval.

Enclosed is a date stamped consent form. Please use this in obtaining consent.

Please notify Nancy Davis, (801) 422-2970, A-285 ASB, of any changes made in the instruments, consent form, or research process before instigating the alterations, so that we can approve them before the change is implemented.

If you have any questions, please let us know. We wish you well with your research!

Sincerely,

Dr. Renea L. Beckstrand, Chair /  
Nancy A. Davis, CIM, Administrator  
Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects  
RLB/cfc

Enclosure

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY · A-285 ASB · PROVO, UTAH 84602  
(801) 422-3841 / FAX: (801) 422-0620

## Appendix B: CES Approval Letter



20 January 2006

Eric Wing  
1363 South 1400 East  
Provo UT 84606

Dear Brother Wing,

The Church Educational System (CES) Research Committee has approved your research project under the following conditions:

1. Data collection instruments and procedures will be reviewed by the CES Education Research Committee before implemented.
2. You will notify program administrators (i.e., dean, department chair) of the dates and times during which you will be collecting data.
3. The requirements of your institutional review board will be met to their satisfaction.
4. You will obtain CES approval to publish any of your research findings.
5. You will provide the CES central office with an electronic copy of your dissertation in Adobe PDF format upon completion of your degree.

We look forward to learning from your research and using it to improve CES programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Garry K. Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Garry K. Moore  
Associate Administrator

epr

## Appendix C: Recruitment Survey

### Prospective Missionary Survey

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. All information on this survey will be collected by the researcher and will only be used for this research. The information you provide and your willingness to participate in this study will not be provided to your teacher and has no implications upon your grade in this class. Please answer the following questions, regardless of whether or not you are able or willing to participate in this study.

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1. When are you planning to leave on a full-time mission? (month and year)

2. In the last month, how often did you study the scriptures by yourself?

- 1) Everyday
- 2) 5-6 times per week
- 3) 3-4 times per week
- 4) 1-2 times per week
- 5) Never

3. In the last month, how much time per day did you typically spend studying the scriptures personally?

- 1) One hour or more
- 2) 40-59 minutes
- 3) 25-39 minutes
- 4) 10-24 minutes
- 5) 1-9 minutes
- 6) None

4. In the last month, what time of day did you normally study the scriptures personally?

- 1) Morning
- 2) Afternoon
- 3) Evening

5. How often do the following things occur:

	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1) I learn important things from my scripture study.	5	4	3	2	1
2) I look forward to my scripture study each day.	5	4	3	2	1
3) I fall asleep during my scripture study.	5	4	3	2	1
4) I think about what I studied in the scriptures throughout the day.	5	4	3	2	1
5) I begin each scripture study with prayer.	5	4	3	2	1
6) I write about things I learned from the scriptures.	5	4	3	2	1
7) I feel the inspiration of the Holy Ghost during my scripture study.	5	4	3	2	1

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If you are willing to participate in research about the personal scripture study habits of prospective missionaries, please write your name and phone # below.  
[Information about this research is provided on the back of this survey.]

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Interview Consent Form

### Consent to be a Research Subject

#### Introduction

This research is being conducted by Eric Wing, a Master's student in Religious Education. The purpose of this study is to explore the personal scripture study habits of prospective missionaries.

#### Procedures

You will be asked to participate in an initial interview, which will last approximately 60 minutes. Questions will involve details, practices, and feelings about your personal scripture study. You will then be asked to participate in two to three follow-up interviews. The interviews will be tape-recorded and then transcribed. You will be contacted by the researcher regarding time and place.

#### Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks for participation in the study. However, you may experience some emotional discomfort due to the personal nature of the questions.

#### Benefits

Possible benefits to you through participation in this study include increased understanding of personal scripture study and better scripture study skills. It is also hoped that through your participation this research will inform individuals, parents, church leaders, missionary trainers, and future researchers about current personal scripture study habits.

#### Confidentiality

All information you provide will remain confidential and will be reported with no identifying information. All data, including tapes/transcriptions and notes, will be kept in a locked storage cabinet and only those directly involved in the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, all identifying information, including audio tapes, will be destroyed.

#### Compensation

There is no monetary compensation for participation in this study.

#### Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate entirely.

#### Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Eric Wing at (801) 367-4719, e@byu.net.

#### Questions about your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Renea Beckstrand, IRB Chair, 422-3873, 422 SWKT, renea\_beckstrand@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED    EXPIRES  
DEC 28 2005 - DEC 27 2006

## Appendix E: Focus Group Consent Form

### Consent to be a Research Subject

#### Introduction

This research is being conducted by Eric Wing, a Master's student in Religious Education. The purpose of this study is to explore the personal scripture study habits of prospective missionaries.

#### Procedures

You will be asked to participate in a focus group, which will last approximately 60 minutes. The focus group will discuss questions regarding details, practices, and feelings about personal scripture study. The interviews will be tape-recorded and then transcribed. You will be contacted by the researcher regarding time and place.

#### Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks for participation in the study. However, you may experience some emotional discomfort due to the personal nature of the questions. As part of a focus group, it is possible that you may feel uncomfortable talking in front of others. The moderator will be sensitive to the feelings of those who participate.

#### Benefits

Possible benefits to you through participation in this study include increased understanding of personal scripture study and better scripture study skills. It is also hoped that through your participation this research will inform individuals, parents, church leaders, missionary trainers, and future researchers about current personal scripture study habits.

#### Confidentiality

All information you provide will remain confidential and will be reported with no identifying information. All data, including tapes/transcriptions and notes, will be kept in a locked storage cabinet and only those directly involved in the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, all identifying information, including audio tapes, will be destroyed.

#### Compensation

There is no monetary compensation for participation in this study.

#### Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate entirely.

#### Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Eric Wing at (801) 367-4719, e@byu.net.

#### Questions about your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Renea Beckstrand, IRB Chair, 422-3873, 422 SWKT, renea\_beckstrand@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED    EXPIRES  
DEC 28 2005 - DEC 27 2006

## Appendix F: Interview Guide for the First Interview

1. How did you do with President Hinckley’s challenge?
  - a. How was your experience? What were your daily routines during those months? (time, place, frequency, etc.)
  
2. How was your scripture study before the challenge?
  - a. Routines?
  
3. How has your scripture study been since the challenge?
  - a. How often have you studied the scriptures by yourself?\*
  - b. Is the length of your study determined by amount of chapters/pages or amount of time?
  - c. What length of time per day do you normally study the scriptures personally?\*
  - d. What time of day do you normally study the scriptures personally?\*
  - e. Where do you normally study? (at a desk, outside, in bed, etc.)
  - f. What book of scripture have you studied from?
  
4. What defines an effective (or meaningful) personal scripture study?
  - a. What do you believe are the purposes of personal scripture study?
  - b. What are your expectations when you study the scriptures?
  - c. What things happen from a scripture study that would make it meaningful?

5. How much do you agree with following statements?	Somewhat Agree    Somewhat Disagree				
	Strongly Agree	Mixed Feelings		Strongly Disagree	
1) My scripture study is good and successful.	5	4	3	2	1
2) I can receive personal revelation through my scripture study.	5	4	3	2	1
3) The scriptures relate to my life.	5	4	3	2	1
4) The scriptures are boring.	5	4	3	2	1
5) My personal scripture study will affect my success as a missionary.	5	4	3	2	1
6) It is a commandment to study the scriptures everyday.	5	4	3	2	1
7) I see many blessings come into my life from my scripture study.	5	4	3	2	1
8) The Holy Ghost is essential for effective scripture study.	5	4	3	2	1

6. How often do the following things occur?*	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1) I learn important things from my scripture study.	5	4	3	2	1
2) I look forward to my scripture study each day.	5	4	3	2	1
3) I fall asleep during my scripture study.	5	4	3	2	1
4) I think about what I studied in the scriptures throughout the day.	5	4	3	2	1
5) I begin each scripture study with prayer.	5	4	3	2	1
6) I write about things I learned from the scriptures.	5	4	3	2	1
7) I feel the inspiration of the Holy Ghost during my scripture study.	5	4	3	2	1
8) I take a personal set of scriptures with me to church.	5	4	3	2	1
9) I apply what I have learned from my personal scripture study.	5	4	3	2	1
10) I share what I learn in the scriptures with others.	5	4	3	2	1

Possible probing questions from #5 & #6:

Why do you/ don't you look forward to you scripture study?

Why do you think it is a commandment?

How do you know it's the Holy Ghost?

How do you determine what is worth writing?

When/how do you think about what you studied during the day?

7. What do you do to invite the Holy Ghost into your study?
8. What study techniques do you use in your scripture study? [marking, footnotes, writing, questions, etc.]
  - a. Where/when did you start using these techniques?
  - b. How has using them changed your study?
9. How would you describe the impact your scripture study makes on your life?
  - a. How have the scriptures helped you in your life? What blessings have you noticed?
  - b. How do you use the scriptures in your life?
10. What questions do you have about scripture study?
  - a. What is confusing?
  - b. What would you want to have better explained to you?

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\* Were asked on the survey.

## Appendix G: Interview Guide for the Second Interview

1. Why do you have the desire to study? What motivates you to study the scriptures?
2. How do you know that studying the scriptures everyday is the right thing to do?
3. What's the difference between reading and studying the scriptures?
4. How has your scripture study gone in the last week or two? Have you noticed anything since our last interview?
5. Describe a meaningful or especially good study session you've had recently.
6. What do you wish you knew in high school about scripture study? What would have helped you then?
7. What are your goals or plans for the future with respect to your personal scripture study?

## Appendix H: Interview Guide for the Third Interview

1. When you begin with prayer, what do you pray for?
  - a. Do you pray after your study? Why?
2. What motivates you to read when you don't want to?
3. What techniques do you use to study rather than read?
4. What is pondering?
5. [President Gordon B. Hinckley quote.] What do you think President Hinckley means by "love affair"?
6. Who (or what) taught you how to study the scriptures?
7. What do you think would help young men to get into the habit of scripture study?
  - a. How do you think young men could learn to study the scriptures effectively?
  - b. How would you teach others how to love the scriptures?
  - c. How could high school students today make scripture study a priority?
8. What role did seminary play in your current scripture study habits? How could seminary have helped?
9. How was your family scripture study when you were growing up?
10. What to you ultimately hope to gain from your scripture study?

## Appendix I: Interview Guide for the Focus Groups

1. What defines an effective (or meaningful) personal scripture study?
2. How have the scriptures helped you in your life? What blessings have you noticed?
3. What's the difference between reading and studying the scriptures?
  - a. What techniques do you use to study, rather than just read?
4. What do you wish you knew in high school about scripture study? What would have helped you then?
  - a. How could high school students today make scripture study a priority?
  - b. What role did seminary play in your current scripture study habits? How could seminary have helped?
5. Why (do you/ don't you) look forward to your scripture study? What is difficult about scripture study?
  - a. What motivates you to read when you don't want to?
6. [President Gordon B. Hinckley quote.] What do you think President Hinckley means by "love affair"?
  - a. What do you think would help young men to love the scriptures?
7. How do you know that studying the scriptures everyday is the right thing to do?
8. Who (or what) taught you how to study the scriptures?
9. What are your goals or plans for the future with respect to your personal scripture study?
10. What questions do you have about scripture study?
  - a. What is confusing?
  - b. What would you want to have better explained to you?

## Appendix J: Focus Group B Transcript

The second focus group was held on campus at BYU on a Wednesday evening. Nine informants were scheduled to participate, but only five attended. Additionally, only three arrived on time and two others came about 15 minutes late. This delay and distraction appeared to adversely affect the interactions of the group. There was little dialogue between them, with a slightly constrained feel in the room. However, as the questioning progressed, everyone seemed to feel more comfortable. The following is the transcript of this focus group almost in its entirety:

Eric: What would you define as an effective scripture study? When you sit down to study your scriptures and your done with a study session, what would you say makes that good or effective scripture study? What made it good or why was it good?

Brent: Studying a specific topic instead of just general; that can help.

Ben: I'd say also...one, feeling the spirit and two,...complete attention the whole time and learning something new. Then sometimes...you just won't feel the spirit, I guess, but if you can pay attention the whole time and really get something out of it, then I'd say that's effective.

Brandon: I'd say what he said, really feeling the spirit is the most important thing. Also for me, I found...when I am not really focusing on the time, but more of what...I get from it, usually I just read for about 30 minutes, and when I'm not...looking at the clock and just...focusing in on the scriptures, that's when I feel it's effective, and when I dig deep. And not...just go over the stories, but kind of...'read between the lines' kind of thing.

Brad: Scripture study for me has been kind of an on and off thing like I've never before this semester, I've never really... sat down for like didn't look at a clock or whatever 'cause you know, it's required, you have to spend in seminary all through high school, you have to spend 15 minutes reading the assigned reading or whatever and then with Book of Mormon [class] these last two semesters I've had to like read the assigned reading and stuff so, I've just counted that as my kind of scripture study, but this last semester I kind of went deeper in that with like I'd read the assigned reading but I'd take like I'd really analyze it like I would a piece of literature and I would like try to make new connections and...annotate in the margins and stuff. I got so much more out of it just cause I never really took the time, to like really pick apart each word, cause like each word has a certain meaning...in the scripture.... At least for me, that was a way and when

I find myself not taking the time to work through it and kind of, you know, how does this work to what I have read before and how does it like, I kind of look at it like scientifically or just analytically and that just really brings the spirit to me.... Lately I haven't been doing that just because...you get busy, but when I do that, that's probably when I feel the Spirit the most.

Brandon: Well...I kind of think of it as a second journal reading the scriptures...if you mark as you go, you can go back and see what you marked and you see the interesting points and stuff that you saw back then.... I don't know who said it, but I heard it somewhere, "The Book of Mormon is always different the second time you read it." And you know, you go back and read it again and you can mark even more stuff that time and you can just add more and more knowledge to...your knowledge of the gospel and...I think it's...good not to plow through and not to speed read just to, you know, follow an agenda that the, you know, the school is putting you through.... You know, read thirty minutes a day and you've got to get done with the Book of Mormon by this date and I think...that's good to set those kinds of goals, but while you're at it, go ahead and take a pen and mark something that's, you know, a key point to you especially, you know, it's something personal in your life and the Book of Mormon will just mean that much more to you. That's kind of what it's done for me. When I started marking the scriptures, that's when I started loving to read the scriptures and always...waiting...when I could find time to read again and again.... So that's cool.

Ben: I think that's really good too.... It's effective if you apply it to something that's going on in your life right then, if you could apply what you read and apply it to what's going on in your life. That would make it effective.

Eric: What would you say is the difference between reading and studying the scriptures?

Brandon: Well...like I said speed reading and...just plowing through the scriptures. That would be reading without real intent.... For instance...you can...give a Book of Mormon to someone on the street, and they can read it, but...if they are not really listening to what they are reading, which is kind of an interesting thought *listening* to what they are reading,...they are not gonna feel anything special, they are just seeing words, and they'll actually be quite a boring experience to them, and they won't enjoy it.... So, I guess, the difference between reading and studying would be to...as you read...try to find things...try to see what that sentence means and try to understand the scriptures and.... Look in the topical guide and find all kinds of things about the gospel and study those things while you read.

Brad: I think one other thing is to when you read the scriptures if you have a question...use other resources along with the Book of Mormon, like either a reference guide or *True to the Faith* or "Strength of Youth," stuff like that. You really, it clarifies a couple things and...it brings deeper meaning. When you are just reading, like before bed, I always read just a verse or what not, sometimes it's more reading than studying. Reading is just like you said...just words on a page if you are just reading and it's just so

surface, but when you really read between the lines, so to speak, you find out what it means to you at that moment.

Bobby: I found that when I read like with a marking pencil or with my reading journal there—when I am really trying to find something to pull out of it—that’s when I find that I read the best, and I’m not just going over the words. That’s when I find the hidden treasures.

Ben: I think study can mean a couple different things, but I think reading really just means like getting the storyline down, like getting historical numbers and that’s important too. I think it’s important to get that. Then studying can mean a couple different things like getting a doctrinal point out of it and getting something that means something in the Church or also just going into depth with it. Like the other day, I was reading in Ether and it talked about how they brought honeybees, or deseret. And I just thought, what the heck, that’s where that word came from and I was thinking it was in reformed Egyptian or whatever, so I was wondered if like Egyptian had that word, for deseret means honeybees. I just looked that all that stuff up and Hugh Nibley like wrote some cool stuff about it and I think that’s studying, when you like go into depth and explore what stuff means.

Eric: I’ve got a quote here...Elder Oaks from this last conference, “Last year, at the invitation of a prophet, millions read the Book of Mormon. Millions benefited. For each of us there were blessings of obedience, and most of us also grew in knowledge and testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom this book is a witness. Many other things were learned, but what was learned depended on the reader. What we get from a book—especially a sacred text—is mostly dependent on what we take to its reading—in desire and readiness to learn, and in attunement to the light communicated by the Spirit of the Lord.” How have you seen what Elder Oaks is describing there in your own personal scripture study—what we get from a sacred text is what we bring to it?

Brad: I was glad I took the invitation to read it again, plus like because last semester it was the invitation to read, plus I had the first half of the Book of Mormon and now I’m in the second half of the Book of Mormon this semester. I’ve already read the Book of Mormon, that was probably my seventh or eight time, but just every time...you don’t think you can get any more out of what you have already read, but there is just, you find things. Because there are situations in your life that are going on right now and, “Oh this is how this applies to my life now.”... That’s why the Book of Mormon is so great cause it helps you at whatever point you are in your life. It has an answer right there to every question.

Ben: The only time I really do get a good scripture study in is when I’m really excited to learn something...or have a question in mind.... That’s the times when I get the most out of it, so I can kind of see what he is saying.

Bobby: I changed my scriptures study from, I used to study at night right before I got to bed, but I found that I...fall asleep and I wasn’t as alert as I would like to have been. So, I

changed it and now I do it in the morning or in the day, afternoon, when I'm more ready to learn. I've learned tons more and I've gotten way more out of the scriptures.

Brad: I agree with that, that's what I did this semester too. I changed mine to more morning and afternoon...cause I used to do it at night. There's just a difference, a huge difference.

Eric: What sparked these changes? Why are you trying to improve your scripture study?

Ben: Definitely a big part of it was the grade. I'm not gonna lie and say it wasn't. I'm glad I did. I really *wanted* to, but this is something that *makes* you, and you need to for your grade. I'm in a Book of Mormon class and that's a big part of it. I really wanted to get better scripture study, but I didn't know if I had as good of a discipline as I thought I did. But it got me to, so I'm happy for it.

Brandon: For me it was my Book of Mormon classes. The institute teachers at UVSC have all this knowledge in their heads. As they are teaching the class, they are bringing out all these very interesting points about the Book of Mormon, the history and things that make you feel the Spirit. And it kind of urged me to say well, "Let's see what I can find personally." So I started to read the Book of Mormon. I was like, "Wow, gee, now my Book of Mormon's all colored with all kinds of ink and stuff."

Brad: I kind of just got sick of not, I felt the spirit before reading it, even just reading through and not fully in depth studying. I just really wanted to 'cause I'm getting ready for my mission. I had a testimony of the Book of Mormon it's just I wanted to have the experience of studying it really in depth, and I did it. I cannot *not* study it this way anymore 'cause it's so much better than it was before.

Bobby: I just remember one night I was falling asleep (reading the scriptures), and I...thought to myself, "I have to change this. I'm not getting nearly enough out of the scriptures as I should be getting." I think it's amazing, the next day when I started studying, I read it the next morning, and I got so much more out of it than I did the previous night. It was amazing.

Ben: Another reason I changed my scripture study is I thought about my mission, and I was like well—it really was...fear—"I'm not ready yet. I really don't know that book well enough to teach people out of it." That was another motivating factor.

Brent: I'm just building a testimony for it, like I had a testimony of the Book of Mormon too, but once you've started going in depth like every night, it just keeps building and building...my testimony has grown so much and it will help on the mission. So you can have a much stronger testimony.

Eric: Kind of momentum plays a role?

Brent: Yeah, 'cause once you taste it, you just want to eat it up. You feel the spirit and you don't want to...a ten-minute study session that you don't get anything out of, so, you just want to keep going and study your best and get as much inspiration out of it as you can.

Brandon: Kind of like getting fat, the more you eat, the more you want to eat. And so, getting fat's a bad thing though, but...it can kind of go the same way for sin, the more you sin, the easier it is to sin. The more you don't go to church, the easier it becomes, but...reading the scriptures like that, you taste that...excellence in the Book of Mormon and you want that more and you can make that analogy, "feasting on the words of Christ," and feasting on the scriptures...when you base...or in a way eat the scriptures or eat the words of the scriptures, you want to keep eating and eating and growing your testimony. It's kind of a weird way to look at it.

Eric: Get fat with the scriptures. P-H-A-T, right? [Laughter.]

Eric: This next question, let's go back to high school.... What do you know about scripture study now that you wish you knew in high school?

Brad: More the historical facts like 'cause in high school, they just kind of brief over the stories. They would be really spiritual and stuff, but at BYU, it's just been so much like, these are the historical facts and this is how they are spiritual; especially the war chapters in Helaman and Alma and stuff. I always thought, I know this is a book like the wars are supposed to teach us something, but I didn't know what.... Just through Book of Mormon, I am like "Wow!" there's a lot to learn from the war chapters. Just basically, stuff like that.

Bobby: I would say marking my scriptures and keeping a study journal in my scriptures makes a big difference, and I didn't do that in high school, and I have been doing that here, and that's made a huge difference. I'm just looking to get things out of the scriptures. And I'm seeing what can I learn from this and what is he saying here. More than just, oh this is just Alma and Amulek being good missionaries.

Ben: I think I wish I would have known how good it was, and how fun it could be too. 'Cause I'd sit there in seminary. I didn't study well at all the scriptures in high school. I would try to read, but I would always zone out, and I wouldn't get anything out of it. In seminary, I was just like, "This is kind of boring." Now that I look back, I had really good teachers and the reason it was so boring was because I didn't know anything. Like if I had really tried and like listened and been reading my scriptures the night before and the sections he assigned, it would have been a lot more fun to go into depth with the teacher. So, I wish I would have known. I wish I would have been disciplined.

Brent: Applying what you read to your life as you are reading it, is really helpful. In high school, I just read it and it was like cool stuff, but now when I read it, I'm like, "Oh, my gosh! It's awesome." I'm going through this. You know, you just get stuff out of it that

can help strengthen you like right then, which really helps me want to keep going with it, you just get so much insight—personal insight.

Brandon: In high school...I thought reading the scriptures was one of the most boring things created unto mankind.... I think maybe I was just more into girls during high school and I wasn't looking in the book, I was kinda going over here. Something I wish I knew...or something I wish I had back in high school was the desire.... When I got into college that's when I had the desire, even then, I didn't have the desire right away. I just kind of had to do it on my own. That's something I wish I had back during high school was the desire to read because that's what made it boring as heck was not having the desire. That's what makes scripture reading boring, not liking it. If you just kind of force yourself to like it, just be positive about it and never think a chapter's too long and kind of have a positive attitude and think look at all this stuff in this chapter...you will get more done in your spiritual life.

Eric: I see a lot of you nodding your heads there. It makes a lot of sense. You mentioned a lot of things in there that were interesting to me, the desire, the change, that you want to apply it, and what got you going. You wished you had the discipline there to just do it.... If you were to go back and advise 15-16 year olds to take scripture study more seriously, like you guys are doing now...how would you encourage them to do that?

Ben: I know...people were doing that all the time back in seminary like in high school, they were saying this is why you should do it, I just didn't listen. It was something I had to choose for myself like people could tell me all the time it could be fun, but I'd be like, "Yeah, it could be, but I'd rather just play."... So, really the only thing I could think to do is to show them something really interesting that's really attention grabbing. Try to get them to really like it. Maybe it would work; maybe it wouldn't.

Bobby: My seminary teachers all through high school would say this is what's really important and most of the kids were just like, "Yeah, okay, whatever." I'd just bear my testimony to them and tell them how important it is, I guess.

Brad: I always had the desire to learn in high school. I don't know how to tell someone. It's like telling someone about college. People can come around and say college is going to be hard, college is going to be hard. All throughout high school, I was like, "Ok, I don't know what to expect." And then you go into college, there is no way, once you've started in college to tell someone in high school 'cause they haven't experienced it. Basically, for me, if I hadn't just decided on my own to really start studying the scriptures, there's no one that could really know. A million people could tell you that...scripture study is so great, it's so awesome, and you get so much out of it, unless you really do it....

Brandon: I think seminary is kind of an interesting thing, at least here in Utah. It kind of feels like it's a required class.... It's not a required class, but...kids go there maybe for peer pressure and you've got your mom and dad signing you up without you even saying anything about it. You come to college and it's kind of your choice, at least at UVSC, to

take institute classes if you want or if you don't want. It kind of makes the kids, that this is my choice and I'm gonna get as much out of it as I can. Whereas, in my seminary class in high school, we had like a lot of punk kids in there, who were in there because their mom and dads signed them up to hopefully drag them out of the punk pit or something. They all sit in that corner and they all talk to themselves and they are not in tune with the Spirit at all.... I guess, you could help them like the scriptures and scripture study by, you know, relating the scriptures more. Like, there's a lot of feeling in the scriptures, there's lots of psychology...between the lines. If you can just pick it up or the seminary teacher could pick that up and bring it out and can say, "Oh, I've felt that way before. My two older brothers would always complain when we wanted to go camping." If it's something they can relate to in high school, then it might make it more interesting for them.

Brent: It's important to help them change their perspective, 'cause back in high school, seminary is just one part of my life that was mainly like basketball and family.... I think it's important to realize that religion should be number one cause it has eternal rewards. It's not just a little added bonus, it's everything.

Ben: I think you can't make someone make it number one. A seminary teacher can be like really inspirational and inspire someone to make a change, but if they don't want to, nothing can be done. You can just try; that's all you can do.

Eric: How did the priority change for you guys?

Brad: I just wanted to start feeling the Spirit more often. Especially 'cause I've been working on my papers, and I'm gonna have to get in the regimen of studying the scriptures 'cause that's what you do all the time, you study the scriptures with your companion, you study with yourself, you study at night, you study in the day. Not just doing it for the habit, but it...changed because I felt like it had to change, because I wasn't feeling the Spirit as often and so, when I did start doing it, it just made me want to do it more.

Ben: I've got an answer, I don't know if it's the best church answer.... I didn't have any really strong spiritual experiences, I had spiritual experiences, but they weren't really profound. What really got me hooked was interesting historical things....

Brent: I was just tired of saying, "I'll start doing it next week." I always said like I'll start studying every night next week or tomorrow, in June or July. I just finally buckled down and did it. Going to college and moving up here and being away from family and living with roommates who have all gone on missions has really helped change my perspective. I'm just realizing how important it is, especially now I'm going on a mission, this stuff is really important.

Bobby: I'm not exactly sure why I changed.... In high school I guess it wasn't really cool to be spiritual, I don't know. When I came here, I just started reading more in depth, I don't know. I'm not sure why.

Brandon: For me, I think it might have been the teachers, the instructors. Every person is different. For some person, it doesn't matter what kind of teacher you give to them, if they don't want to do it, they don't want to do it. But for me...I've always wanted to read the scriptures, but I didn't know it until someone got up there and said, "You like it"...through their teaching. So, I guess, it was the teachers who really helped me...skyrocket in scripture study and they're the ones who really helped me out.

Eric: What blessings have you seen in your life that you would directly connect with your scripture study?

Brad: I have better self-control, especially with thoughts...even in that's one of the guys' biggest temptations, you know, their thoughts. I've noticed more an added measure of the Spirit, just like the sacrament prayers say, "have the spirit to be with you." The more, like I watch TV and stuff, the more I realize the wicked I wasn't seeing before and like how much it is, whoa. You are much more in tune and are more sensitive to the Spirit.

Brandon: I agree with that, once you have a spiritual experience in the Book of Mormon, especially for consecutively for a long time, and then you decide to relax and decide to do something else that you might would have done before, all of a sudden, it...shocks you. It's like...going outside in the sun and coming back inside with the artificial light. It's a big huge difference....

Bobby: I'm definitely a lot happier when I am reading my scriptures and also, as I read more in depth and try to get more out of it, I do that in every facet of my life. Like in classes, in General Conference, I noticed that especially, before I would just sit on the couch in my pajama's and just watch and maybe feel a little Spirit, but this time I was there and kind of just learning so much from the prophets.

Ben: I'd say the same thing. I can't believe how I really have a different outlook on life. Like I'm really happier. That's the one thing I've really noticed that it just completely changed how much happier I was.... You notice the good in things and it really just feels like you are happier. That's one thing I've noticed.

Brent: I totally agree with that. I'm also more spiritually in tune. I recognize spiritual promptings a lot easier now. Before it was like a guessing game for me. But now, I'm able to make a lot more decisions based on promptings by the Spirit instead of just on my own. Just reading the Book of Mormon always helps me know when the Spirit is trying to tell me something, and helped me in life, too, to make lots of changes.

Brandon: On a blunt unspiritual side, if I don't study anything at all...educational, I get a headache. So, I've got to study something. Well, I guess the blessing for me are two kinds of knowledge, one knowledge, period; and two, spiritual knowledge, knowledge of the gospel.... You've got people who don't know anything about the gospel in the world and they are out there saying their prayers and saying, "I hope God heard that. I know God will help me in my life, at least I think he will." For me, adding to spiritual knowledge, you know if the Lord is going to help you or not.... You say your prayers and

you know that He is going to answer in His own time.... 'Cause he knows when his answer is going to be more effective for me.... But...a blessing for me is knowledge. Knowledge for me is happiness. Even if I was living in a box, a cardboard box, in a New York alleyway, if I had...someday to keep getting knowledge from something. If I had my encyclopedia out in that junkyard, I guess. And I was reading from it, the knowledge would give me joy.... That's what the scriptures do for me, in a spiritual sense, which is even more significant than that, so you know it gives me real great joy because it gives me spiritual knowledge and strength.

Eric: President Hinckley: "I hope that [scripture study] will become something far more enjoyable than a duty; that, rather, it will become a love affair with the Word of God. I promise you that as you read, your minds will be enlightened and your spirits will be lifted. At first it may seem tedious, but that will change into a wondrous experience with thoughts and words of things divine." What do you think President Hinckley means by "love affair?" He hopes that our scripture study will be a "love affair" with the word?

Brad: That nothing interferes with it. So, it's like the scripture which says, "Be still and know that I am God." 'Cause that's your time to be still and to not worry about anything else. You're like having a conversation with God.... You're reading and so when you're reading, it's really like a prayer. Your spirit is connecting with the Spirit and you're really, like you're one, you're in unity with God. That's what I think it means.

Brent: Something we'll never want to give up. Something we'll always want to have.

Ben: I think about what love means...it can grow. The longer I've gone studying every night and trying hard, the more fun it gets. And I just know that it will keep happening and it will get sweet if I keep going and really get into deep stuff.... I think that will really be fun. I think that's what that means.

Brandon: Well, I heard John Bytheway say, "If you want to talk to God, pray. If you want God to talk to you, read your scriptures." I thought that was interesting, because God speaks to us through his prophet, through the scriptures He's provided for us.... With callings, you have certain callings that people like and certain callings that people don't like, the ones that they want and don't want. I got thinking, whatever the Lord wants me to do, that's what I want to do. 'Cause I want to do what the Lord wants me to do, so whether or not...I like doing it or not, I'm going to enjoy it because God commanded me to do it.... And so, if he gives me a calling, I'm going to like that calling and I'm not going to have a bitter attitude about it because that's what I like to do, all of a sudden, because that's what he's planned for me to do. And reading the scriptures...I love reading the scriptures because...that's how...the Lord can talk to me...that's how he can tell me his gospel is through his scriptures. And, like it says in there love affair, you've got to love it more than your parents, you've got to love God more than or anything. You've got to love him more than your girlfriend, your wife (when you get one), more than your kids because he's the one who will lead you to happiness. A strong testimony and faith any of your friends might have and if your parents/wife/or children...they're still not

perfect, but God is perfect and he is never going to lead you astray. Whatever he commands...that is the right thing to do. That is what we should love.

Bobby: I think he's talking about kind of like a change of heart. You just change from our old ways of being lazy. You don't want to read till you just read it and find out how great it is, you just love it and you want to learn more from it, and seek knowledge from it.

## Appendix K: Categories and Terms for Units of Data

1. Effective methods and techniques (E-prayer, E-mornings, etc.)
  - a. Prayer
  - b. Mornings
  - c. Journal
  - d. Consistency / momentum
  - e. Studying vs. reading
  - f. Go in with a question
  - g. Try to learn
  - h. Read “between the lines”
  - i. Pondering
  - j. Focus / concentrate
  - k. Be formal / serious
  - l. Marking
  - m. Reverence
  - n. Likening / personalizing / applying
  - o. Work / effort
  - p. Read for time
  - q. Agency / desire vs. duty
  - r. Use other resources (*True to the Faith, Preach My Gospel*, etc.)
2. Less effective methods (LE)
  - a. Reading at night before bed
  - b. Reading in bed
  - c. Reading to read / reading it like a story, or like a book
  - d. Reading out of duty, or as a chore
  - e. Lack of agency / impersonal
3. President Hinckley’s Challenge (PHC)
  - a. Desired promised blessings
  - b. Testimony he is the prophet
  - c. Motivated to accomplish
  - d. First time reading scripture consistently
  - e. Experienced new blessings
4. Blessings identified (B)
  - a. Feel Spirit / gain Spirit
  - b. In tune with Spirit / understand spiritual promptings
  - c. Makes day go better
  - d. Interested in reading
  - e. Learn new things
  - f. Changes life
  - g. Helps to live commandments / be an example / be a better person
  - h. Find applications to life / gain specific direction

- i. Happier
  - j. More friendly / loving to others
  - k. Source of comfort / peace
  - l. Stronger self-control
  - m. Makes more spiritual / personal growth
  - n. Receive answers
  - o. Strengthens family relationships
  - p. Thoughts are more positive
  - q. Helps to think more clearly / opens mind
  - r. More confident
  - s. Gain insights / “hidden treasures”
  - t. Strengthens testimony of Prophet
  - u. Gain firmer trust in God
  - v. Understand purposes for being earth
  - w. Helps to prepare for mission
  - x. Helps to resist temptation / spiritual protection
  - y. Feeling of accomplishment
  - z. Easier to answer questions
  - aa. Avoid heartache and pain
  - bb. Remember better
5. Priority (P)
- a. Low priority
  - b. Increased by questions / specific need
  - c. Increased by seeing blessings
  - d. Challenge / goals
6. Structure / Schedule / Discipline (S)
- a. Deadline of challenge
  - b. Class requirement
  - c. Chosen habit / conviction
  - d. Lack of structure
  - e. Being goal-oriented
7. Intrinsic Motivation / Desire (M-mission, etc)
- a. Recognize need in life / desire to change / desire to learn
  - b. Desire to be successful missionary
  - c. Spiritual experiences with the scriptures / seeing blessings
  - d. Fulfill President Hinckley’s challenge
  - e. Obedience
  - f. Example of others
  - g. Teaching from others
  - h. Testimony it is right
8. Extrinsic Motivation (M-grade, M-duty, etc.)
- a. Stickers / Awards in Seminary

- b. Class requirement for grade
  - c. Duty / seeing it as chore/to-do item
9. Connection to God / personalizing (C)
- a. Reading with a question
  - b. Spiritual guidance in study
  - c. Reverence invites
  - d. Scripture study invites communication with God
10. Background (Family, Church, Seminary)
- a. Family
  - b. Church
  - c. Seminary
11. Beliefs / doctrinal understanding (D)
- a. Scripture study is right
  - b. Scriptures are the Word of God / scriptures are sacred / written by inspired prophets
  - c. Blessings can come through it
  - d. Revelation can come through it
  - e. Agency is necessary for effective scripture study
  - f. Effective scripture study is necessary for missionary success
12. Agency (A)
- a. Had to be self-initiated / must go into it willingly
  - b. Personal application
  - c. Isn't effective without
  - d. Obedience
  - e. Personal motives and desires
13. Current attitudes vs. HS attitudes (18)
- a. More serious
  - b. More willing
  - c. More understanding
  - d. More experience
  - e. More maturity
14. High school practices / attitudes (HS)
- a. Didn't do it
  - b. Did it for award / chore
  - c. Didn't know how
  - d. Didn't prioritize it highly / lacked desire and motivation
  - e. Didn't give it a chance
15. Suggestions (Sugg)
- a. Teach how

- b. College students can advise
- c. Set an example
- d. Bear testimony
- e. Help to like it / make it enjoyable

16. Effect of Seminary (Seminary)

- a. Inspired to read more
- b. Grade requirement
- c. Didn't teach how

17. Effect of Institute/Religion classes (Inst, BYU)

- a. Learned effective methods
- b. Inspired to read effectively
- c. Grade requirement
- d. Form of structure

18. Effects of these interviews (I)

- a. Expose reality
- b. Offered support
- c. Increased awareness

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