

Choose To Read (CTR)—the Scriptures



Joseph Smith said, *“I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable? . . . To ascertain its meaning, we must dig up the root and ascertain what it was that drew the saying out of Jesus.”* [HC, 5:261]

Do you think Joseph Smith ever asked “Why” while reading the scriptures? Yes, his quote above shows that he did. But why did he ask why?—because he wanted to know MORE. Do you want to know more? Then follow Joseph’s example and ask why when reading your scriptures. For instance:

- WHY 3 gifts for Jesus from the wise men from the East and not 1 or 2 or 5 or more? Certainly these Magi could afford more. (Mt. 2:11)
- WHY did Satan tempt Jesus 3 times in a row in 3 different ways? Why not several more times and ways to wear him down? (Mt. 4:3-9)
- WHY did the Savior’s ministry last 3 years? Wouldn’t it have been great to have it last five years or longer? (DC 138:25)
- WHY would the Savior pray 3 times in the Garden of Gethsemane? Why wasn’t once enough? Was it because the apostles were sleeping? (Mt. 26:39-49)
- WHY was Jesus Christ resurrected after 3 days? Wouldn’t it have been more impressive after a month? (Mosiah 3:10)
- WHY did Jesus ask Peter 3 times if he loved Him? Wasn’t Peter listening? And why did the Savior’s response to Peter change? (Jn. 21:15-17)

These questions involve the number three. “3” is a fascinating number. Its use in the world describes such things as a triangle; the dimensions of a cube—length, width, height; the divisions of time—past, present, and future; and even more. But what does the number three have to do with scripture? As used in scripture, “three” is usually symbolic of **God’s will, purpose, influence, covenants, involvement and satisfaction**. It also suggests **full, complete, and sufficient** (e.g., the 3 members of the Godhead—Elohim (God the Father), Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost; 3 attributes of a God—Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent; and the 3 Degrees of Glory—Telestial, Terrestrial, and Celestial).

Jesus used numbers and other items as symbols such as names, food, body parts, colors, plants, the four elements of earth, animals, places and titles to enrich the lives of His believers. Remember, Christ used parables to disguise the truth from those who would not appreciate it, but also to explain truth to those who sought it by **pondering** about what he said. When you discover the use of “3” in the scriptures, a deeper meaning opens up to you—if you **think** about it.

When I find instances where “three” things occur, I ask myself why this would be? Doing so is fun, interesting and enlightening. Why don’t YOU try it in your reading? At first you will catch the obvious places where the words “three” or “third” or “thrice” are in the verse, like “...and the *third* day he shall rise again.” (Mt. 20:19) But then you will begin to pick up on verses where the number three is not specifically mentioned. For example, “...I am the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*...” (Jn. 14:6) and “...*gold*, and *frankincense* and *myrrh*...” (Mt. 2:11) And, like a parable, the final level of difficulty gets really interesting. For example, find the use of three spread out over several scripture verses. Here’s one: Jesus raised 3 people from the dead. (Mk. 5:22-24, 35-43; Lk. 7:11-17; Jn. 11:1-46) Looking for “3’s” is one way to “enquire” further into the scriptures and to understand them better as Joseph Smith suggested.

Jesus Christ invited all to **search and find** the truth: “*Ask*, and it shall be given you; *seek*, and ye shall find; *knock*, and it shall be opened unto you.” (Mt. 7:6-7) See how many times the use of **three** jumps out at you when you read the scriptures. Each time ask **why** and enquire further. You WILL be surprised! **Send me your results by email and I will post new ones with your name on my website for everyone’s benefit.** Now it’s time to play hide and seek in the scriptures. **Enjoy!**



Three might be God's favorite number based on its use in the scriptures. Here are some instances of "3" in the scriptures in addition to the examples given on the front page.

Description	Stand Work	Book	Ch & Verse
3 sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth (Abraham is a descendant of Shem)	OT	Genesis	6:10
3 heavenly messengers visit Abraham and tell him Sarah will have a son	OT	Genesis	18:2-10
3 times the Lord counsels Joshua to be strong and courageous	OT	Joshua	1:6-7,18
3 times Delilah tries to get Samson to tell his source of strength	OT	Judges	16:6,10,13
3 times the Lord calls Samuel as a boy by name and Samuel goes to Eli	OT	1 Sam.	3:4-8
3 dimensions of the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple: 20Lx20Wx20H cubits	OT	1 Kings	6:16,20
3 times Elijah stretched over the dead child before he comes back to life	OT	1 Kings	17:21-22
3 times Elijah pours water on stone altar & prays to God; everything consumed	OT	1 Kings	18:32-38
3 Hebrews put in a fire: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego	OT	Daniel	3:19-20
3 times a day Daniel prays to God	OT	Daniel	6:10
3 days and 3 nights Jesus says Jonah was in the belly of whale	NT	Matt.	12:40
3 times Peter denies knowing Jesus before the rooster crows twice	NT	Matt.	26:69-75
3rd hour (9am) crucifixion of Jesus begins	NT	Mark	15:25
3 hours of darkness while Christ is on the cross between 6th & 9th hour	NT	Mark	15:33
3 days Jesus is missing when he stays behind in Jerusalem at age 12	NT	Luke	2:46
3 times Pontius Pilate finds no fault with Jesus and tries to release Him	NT	Luke	23:4,14,22
3 languages written on sign above Jesus on cross: "This is the King of the Jews"	NT	Luke	23:38
3 times John the Baptist bears testimony of Christ	NT	John	1:29,32,36
3 days Saul is blind in Damascus after his vision	NT	Acts	9:9
3 times the voice comes to Peter telling him what God cleanses is okay to eat	NT	Acts	11:7-10
3 times Paul asks the Lord to remove the "thorn" in his flesh	NT	2 Cor	12:7-8
3 days after leaving Jerusalem Lehi pitches his tent in the wilderness	BM	1 Ne.	2:6
3 attempts by sons of Lehi to get brass plates from Laban	BM	1 Ne.	3:11,23; 4:1
3 days Ammon is servant to King Lamoni before power shown at waters of	BM	Alma	17:26
3rd day King Lamoni awakes from a coma	BM	Alma	19:1,8,12
3 times Korihor was asked if he believes or if he denies God and Christ	BM	Alma	30:37-48
3 times a mild voice speaks to 300 people and the prison walls shake	BM	Hel.	5:29-33
3 days of darkness in the western world at Christ's death	BM	3 Ne.	8:23
3 times God's voice from heaven is heard but is not understood until the 3rd	BM	3 Ne.	11:3-6
3 times Jesus goes a little ways off by himself to pray	BM	3 Ne.	19:19,27,31
3 days Jesus Christ is with the Nephites	BM	3 Ne.	26:13
3 Nephites, of the chosen Twelve Disciples, are allowed to stay on earth	BM	3 Ne.	28:4-9
3 hours the Lord talks with the brother of Jared	BM	Ether	2:14
3 witnesses by the power of God will be shown the gold plates	BM	Ether	5:3-4
3 essentials for salvation: faith, hope, charity	BM	Moroni	10:21
3 heavens or degrees in the Celestial Kingdom	DC	Section	131:1
3 times Moses tells Satan to depart before the name of Christ is used	PGP	Moses	1:16-22
3 times Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith during the night in 1823	PGP	JS-H	1:30,44,46
3 years between Joseph Smith's First Vision and the first appearance of Moroni	PGP	JS-H	1:27

Put your own instances of "3" here.
