

CTR (Choose To Read)—the Scriptures

“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.” [Joseph Smith, HC, 5:261]

Do you think Joseph Smith ever asked “WHY” while reading the scriptures? His quote above says 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 did Jesus ask Peter 3 times if he loved Him? Wasn’t Peter listening?

WHY 3 gifts for Jesus at his birth and not 1 or 2 or 5, 6, 7 or more?

WHY did the Savior’s ministry last 3 years? Wouldn’t it have been great to go five years or more?

WHY did Satan tempt Jesus Christ 3 times in a row? Why not more to wear him down?

WHY would the Savior pray 3 times in the Garden of Gethsemane? Why wasn’t once enough?

WHY was Jesus resurrected after 3 days? Wouldn’t it have been more impressive after a month?



All these questions involve the number three. “3” is a fascinating number. Its use in the world describes a triangle, the dimensions of a cube—length, width, depth— x^3 and more. But what does the number three have to do with the scriptures? As a symbol in scripture, “three” indicates God’s involvement and influence. It suggests **full, complete, sufficient** (e.g., the 3 members of the Godhead; the 3 attributes of a God—omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent; and the 3 Degrees of Glory).

Jesus used numbers and other symbolic language such as colors, animals, clothing and body parts 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 find 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 finally, like a video game, the next level of difficulty gets really interesting. For example, find the use of “3” spread out over several scripture verses. Here’s one: Jesus raised three people from the dead. (Mt. 9:18, 25; Lk. 7:14-15; Jn. 11:43) Looking for “3’s” is one way to “enquire” further into the scriptures. It allows you 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! **Keep track of your results and send me a copy by email. I will post them on my website for everyone’s benefit. You will receive personal recognition and a small token of our appreciation.** So far I’ve found 36 just in the New Testament. Now it’s time to play hide and seek. **Enjoy!**