

Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge

Part 2 (40 minutes)

Answering Doctrinal or Historical Questions

Read the following statement by President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"Young people wonder 'why?'—Why are we commanded *to do* some things, and why we are commanded *not* to do other things?" ("The Great Plan of Happiness" [address to Church Educational System religious educators, Aug. 10, 1993], si.lds.org).

Consider if you have ever wondered why we are commanded to do some things and not to do other things. For example, some might wonder why God has commanded us to keep the Sabbath day holy or why He has commanded that sexual intimacy be expressed only between a man and a woman who are legally married.

Note: This portion of the lesson on acquiring spiritual knowledge is intended to help you learn principles that can guide you when you have questions or are presented with questions from others regarding the doctrine, practices, and history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Remember the doctrine when you learned about the source of truth and how to acquire spiritual knowledge: God knows all things and is the source of all truth. Remembering this truth is helpful when we have questions about the Church that seem difficult to understand.

Consider the following principles:

- *Act in faith.*
- *Examine concepts and questions with an eternal perspective.*
- *Seek further understanding through divinely appointed sources.*

These principles can guide us as we seek to learn and understand eternal truth and resolve questions or issues.

Act in Faith

Read principle 1, “Act in Faith,” from the “Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge” section in the *Doctrinal Mastery Core Document*. Look for and mark the principles that will help you to answer questions you and others have about the Church.

Consider the following principle and answer the questions that follow:

As we seek to develop our understanding and to resolve concerns, it is important that we rely on the testimony that we already have of Jesus Christ, the Restoration of His gospel, and the teachings of His ordained prophets.

How do you think these principles can help us as we sincerely seek understanding and answers to difficult questions and issues?

Read the following account shared by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Look for how a young woman acted in faith when faced with a challenging situation.



"Recently, I spoke with a Laurel from the United States. I quote from her email:

" 'This past year some of my friends on Facebook began posting their position on marriage. Many favored same-sex marriage, and several LDS youth indicated they "liked" the postings. I made no comment.

" 'I decided to declare my belief in traditional marriage in a thoughtful way.

" 'With my profile picture, I added the caption "I believe in marriage between a man and a woman." Almost instantly I started receiving messages. "You are selfish." "You are judgmental." One compared me to a slave owner. And I received this post from a great friend who is a strong member of the Church: "You need to catch up with the times. Things are changing and so should you."

" 'I did not fight back,' she said, 'but I did not take my statement down.'

"She concludes: 'Sometimes, as President Monson said, "You have to stand alone." Hopefully as youth, we will stand together in being true to God and to the teachings of His living prophets' " ("Spiritual Whirlwinds," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 19–20).

In what ways did this young woman act in faith when faced with a difficult situation?

Have you ever faced similar criticism for standing up for what you believe? How did you respond?

Examine Concepts and Questions with an Eternal Perspective

People during the time of the Apostle Paul faced many of the same questions and concerns that we may experience today. Read 1 Corinthians 2:5, 9–11 looking for what Paul taught is necessary to understand spiritual truth.

What do these verses say about how we can understand spiritual truth?

It is only by the Spirit of God that we can know “the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10)—meaning the truths that can only be understood through revelation.

Read principle 2, “Examine Concepts and Questions with an Eternal Perspective,” in the “Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge” section in the *Doctrinal Mastery Core Document*. Look for how we can seek the help of the Spirit and examine concepts and questions with an eternal perspective.

What truths listed under principle 2 help us to understand how to best examine questions?

To further understand how these principles can help us as we consider our questions and the questions of others, read the following statement by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Look for why it is important to consider the assumptions or beliefs on which a question is based.



"Because of our knowledge of [the plan of salvation] and other truths that God has revealed, we start with different assumptions [or beliefs] than those who do not share our knowledge. As a result, we reach different conclusions on many important subjects that others judge only in terms of their opinions about mortal life. ...

"... [We] will often be better off to respond by identifying the worldly premises or assumptions in the assertions [we] face [from others], and then by identifying the different assumptions or premises that guide the thinking of Latter-day Saints. This won't elicit agreement from persons who don't share our faith, but it can move the discussion away from arguing over conclusions to identifying the real source of disagreement" ("As He Thinketh in His Heart" [evening with Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Feb. 8, 2013], broadcasts.lds.org).

How might our beliefs or assumptions affect the questions we ask and the conclusions we arrive at?

Our knowledge of God and His plan of salvation helps us understand the purpose for the commandments He has given us. In contrast, those who do not share our knowledge of Heavenly Father's plan of salvation will likely view the commandments differently from how we might view them.

Think about the following question and then answer the questions that follow: *Why would a loving God restrict us or take away our rights by giving us commandments rather than allow us the freedom to do whatever makes us happy?*

What are the assumptions someone might make when asking this question?

What truths do we know about Heavenly Father and His plan for us that help us look at this question through His perspective?

How does this eternal perspective change our understanding of the concern?

How does having a spiritual witness, through the power of the Holy Ghost, of the Restoration, the divine calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon help you when you are faced with a question regarding the Church?

How does knowing that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is a central part of His plan affect your views when societal opinions challenge the definition of marriage as between a man and a woman?

Seek Further Understanding through Divinely Appointed Sources

Read principle 3, “Seek Further Understanding through Divinely Appointed Sources,” in the “Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge” section in the *Doctrinal Mastery Core Document*. Look for what God has given us to help us discover and understand truth (Mark what you find).

What has God given us to help us discover and understand truth?

What blessings can we receive as we turn to the Lord’s divinely appointed sources of truth?

Remember the story of “The Blind Man and the Elephant” in Part 1 of the “Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge” lesson. How does the poem about the blind men and the elephant illustrate the need to turn to divinely appointed sources for answers and direction?

The first sentence of the second paragraph under principle 3, “Seek Further Understanding Through Divinely Appointed Sources,” states, “We can also learn truth through other trustworthy sources.”

How can we recognise truth found in other trustworthy sources of information?

Why is it important to beware of unreliable sources of information?

Extra Resources:

- The official Church website mormonnewsroom.org (clarifies information regarding various issues of public interest related to the Church and corrects partial or incorrect information being spread through the media).
- The Church’s Gospel Topics page at topics.lds.org. The Gospel Topics essays contain valuable and forthright information on many difficult historical and doctrinal issues.

Note: During the school year, in addition to studying the teachings of the New Testament sequentially, you will also be studying the nine doctrinal topics from the *Doctrinal Mastery Core Document* (which correspond to topics in the Sunday youth curriculum) and the New Testament doctrinal mastery passages associated with each topic. As each topic is studied, you will use the principles of acquiring spiritual knowledge discussed in this lesson to consider real questions, issues and opportunities for personal application.