

For I Did Liken All Scriptures unto Us

The Tooele North Stake Family Vision Statement



Tooele Twenty-Ninth Ward

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Chad Staten

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He Likened

During his mortal ministry, the Lord taught many things in parables. The Savior is a master teacher, in part, because he understands perfectly the concept of teaching to the level of the student. Depending on the preparation of the listener, important principles and truths are either veiled or revealed in these short stories. Numerous times in the narrative of the New Testament, we see examples of Christ teaching the people using both language they could understand and everyday objects and events they could relate to — things that were familiar to them such as sheep that wander, planting seeds, owing debts, and wedding feasts — and then compared them to things of a higher order. In other words, he *likened*.

- He likened the kingdom of heaven unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.¹
- He likened the kingdom of heaven unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.²
- He likened the kingdom of heaven unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.³
- He likened the kingdom of God unto a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth.⁴
- He likened those who would hear his sayings, and do them, unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.⁵

What does it mean to liken? To liken is to point out the resemblance of someone or something to someone or something else. When you study the scriptures most effectively, you liken the scriptures to your life. As you read, consider how the stories and teachings in the scriptures apply in your own life.

I Likened

Speaking of my own life, I recently participated in an online discussion in the LDS Organists Facebook Chat. We were talking about what it means to have the Spirit with us while we play, and how we can help others feel the spirit through our playing. I made the observation that, though the Spirit will help us if we get into a bind, we have no promise that he will save us from our own laziness or lack of preparation. In other words, it is up to us to practice the music so that we can play proficiently. I paraphrased a scripture and applied it to the circumstances: “for we know that it is by [the spirit] that we [play], after all we can do.”⁶

¹ Matthew 13:24

² Matthew 18:23

³ Matthew 25:1

⁴ Mark 4:31

⁵ Matthew 7:24

⁶ 2 Nephi 25:23 (adapted)

I likened.

Perhaps this discussion was of no profound or eternal consequence — or was it?
Let's turn this Facebook discussion into a Parable.



For the Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto two organists who were seeking to play in the house of their master. One of the organists was wise, and the other was foolish.

He that was wise spent much time in preparation. He learned both the left hand, and the right. The pedal part he also learned so that his feet found with a surety the notes they were to play. He practiced all the day long, and when the night came, he ceased not his playing until the time came for the master to retire to bed. When the dawn came, the wise organist again mounted the bench and continued his labors to increase his talents.

He that was foolish practiced not. The left hand did he not learn, neither did he learn the right, nor the pedal part, but squandered his time in idle pursuits. While the wise organist reserved practice time and labored, the foolish organist slumbered and slept. He wasted his talents with riotous living. Television he watched, text messages he wrote, email he read, and Facebook he surfed.

After many days, there was a cry made that the day of reckoning was at hand. The wise organist feared not to play for his master, for his preparation was great. But the foolish organist was sore afraid. And the foolish said unto the wise "Give me of your reserved practice time on the organ, for on the morrow I play for the master." The wise answered saying "Not so, lest my playing become rusty, but go ye rather to them that schedule and seek practice time on a different organ."

When the morning came, the wise organist played first for his master. His playing pleased the Lord insomuch that he said "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. I will make thee an organist to play for the visitors to mine house."

Then came the foolish organist to play before his master. Rough his playing was, and slow. And his Lord said unto him, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest the day was coming in which thy talents would be judged. Thou oughtest therefore to have labored diligently to improve thy playing. Put away therefore thine organ shoes, and turn pages for him which hath increased his talents."

And the foolish organist went away, sorrowing.

What lessons can we draw from this silly story?

The first lesson we can learn is obviously that if we want to avoid being assigned to turn pages, we need to practice diligently! Now let me say that I am very grateful for those who have turned pages for me. This is a very important job, and I'm just using this illustration here as an object lesson!

But the real point I want to make from this little parable is that this is one kind of pattern you can use in your own likening, either individually or as a family.

You Liken

Perhaps in a Family Home Evening or other setting, you can make up your own parable to teach some important principle to your family. Your children will be filled with delight as you relate the story to them. As they listen, they will hear clues and begin to recognize themselves as characters in the story. Who has forgotten the

story of the Good Samaritan or the Prodigal Son? With your personal touch, your family will internalize the lessons you teach in a way that won't soon, if ever, be forgotten.



How else can we begin to liken the scriptures unto ourselves? Sister Julie Beck mentioned that some people “start by choosing a subject in the topical guide that they need to know more about. Or they start at the beginning of a book of scripture and look for specific teachings as they read through.”⁷

The guidebook for the new *Come Follow Me for Individuals and Families*, presents some more suggestions to help you get the most out of your scripture study.

- What experiences have I had that are similar to what I am reading?
- How can I follow the example of this person in the scriptures?
- When have you felt...
- Imagine yourself as...

⁷ *My Soul Delighteth in the Scriptures*, Julie B. Beck, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, April 2004 General Conference.

Questions and cues like these can help us to put *ourselves* into the story. As we insert our own names, places, people, and events, the scriptures come alive for us. Those ancient writers who have slumbered in the dust speak to us, guide us, and inspire us so that we may learn from their examples and experiences.

A scripture from Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament often comes to my mind:

9. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.
10. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.⁸

“There is no new thing under the sun...”

What does this mean for us? It means there is nothing you will ever encounter that hasn't happened somewhere, sometime, to someone in the past. There is no sadness that hasn't been felt, nor love that hasn't been cherished. There is no joy that hasn't been celebrated, nor sorrow that hasn't been mourned. There is no hardship that hasn't been endured, nor trial that hasn't been overcome. There is no sickness that hasn't been borne, nor pain that hasn't been suffered.



So whatever comes your way, you can always look to the scriptures and find something that will help you in your journey along the gospel path. Maybe it's a story covering multiple chapters, or maybe it's a single verse, or even a single word.

⁸ Ecclesiastes 1:9-10

Whatever it is, I promise that, as you make an effort to liken the scriptures unto yourselves, the Lord will bless you with a deeper understanding than you have ever had before. You will be able to relate to the scriptures in new ways, and you will find that the scriptures speak to you *individually* in ways that strengthen your testimony and open your eyes to a greater awareness that our Father in Heaven knows you, and loves you better and more intensely than you know or love yourself.

When you liken the scriptures unto yourselves, you will be in good company. Prophets through the ages into modern times, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself, have laid down a pattern of likening for us to follow.

Sister Linda Burton spoke in a conference talk about the ten virgins. As she pointed out, though this parable refers to our preparation for the Second Coming, “we could also liken it to being prepared for temple blessings, which can be like a spiritual feast for those who are well-prepared.”⁹ This is an example of how a scripture can be adapted to fit our circumstances.

In another conference, Elder Packer recounted an experience he had with the scriptures in his younger years. He mentioned reading Lehi’s Dream in the Book of Mormon. “I had read that more than once,” he said. “It did not mean much to me. The prophet Nephi also said that he had written “the things of my soul... for the learning and profit of my children. I had read that before, and it did not mean all that much to me, either. But later when we had children, I understood that both Lehi and Nephi felt just as deeply about their children as we feel about our children and grandchildren. When a verse I had passed over several times took on personal meaning, I thought whoever wrote that verse had a deep and mature understanding of my life and how I felt.”¹⁰

⁹ *Prepared in a Manner That Never Had Been Known*, Linda K. Burton, Relief Society General President, October 2014 General Conference

¹⁰ *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ—Plain and Precious Things*, Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, April 2005 General Conference

Of likening the scriptures unto ourselves, Nephi himself wrote the following:

22 Now it came to pass that I, Nephi, did teach my brethren these things; and it came to pass that I did read many things to them, which were engraven upon the plates of brass, that they might know concerning the doings of the Lord in other lands, among people of old.

23 And I did read many things unto them which were written in the books of Moses; but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; *for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning.*

24 Wherefore I spake unto them, saying: Hear ye the words of the prophet, ye who are a remnant of the house of Israel, a branch who have been broken off; hear ye the words of the prophet, which were written unto all the house of Israel, *and liken them unto yourselves*, that ye may have hope as well as your brethren from whom ye have been broken off; for after this manner has the prophet written.¹¹

Sometimes — probably too frequently — my own scripture study has consisted of reading a few random verses from random books of scripture at random times. For any of us who might have struggled in the past to add structure, meaning, and purpose to our scripture study, the new *Come Follow Me for Individuals and Families* guidebook should be a welcome tool to help us achieve much more fulfilling scripture study.



Your personal devotion to Christ cannot be measured with a ruler or a scale. The measure of your discipleship is between you and the Lord. You are not in competition with anyone else on the earth. You are an individual son or daughter

¹¹ 1 Nephi 19:22-24

of God. Your strengths and weaknesses are as unique as your fingerprints or your DNA. The Lord will bless you as you continually strive to learn his teachings and liken them to yourself.

As you draw closer and closer to him, I offer this promise, that:

- Your ears will be opened, that you may increasingly hear the whisperings of the Spirit as he speaks truth to your soul.
- Your eyes will be opened to the blessings that continually shower down upon you — even those “blessings in disguise.”
- Your heart will be opened, that you will become more aware of others and their struggles, whether physical or spiritual, and that you may have compassion on them and find ways to serve that you hadn’t considered before.

These assurances I leave with you, along with my witness, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.