

Five Lessons for Young Adults from Young Apostles

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They were between the ages of 23 and 35, yet they helped change the world. The first

Apostles of the restored Church were young. Some felt inadequate. Some made mistakes. But they all made a difference. Here are five lessons we can learn from their experiences.

1. You Don't Have to Feel Good Enough to Be Good Enough

Heber C. Kimball felt inadequate when he received his call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in February 1835. He had been in the Church less than three years and was just 33 years old.

"It was far from my expectation," Heber

What can we learn today from the experiences of the first Apostles of the Restoration?

later recalled.¹ But he was willing to accept the calling, and in his ordination blessing he was told "that many millions" would "be converted by his instrumentality."²

As an Apostle he served two highly successful missions to England. He converted a host of individuals whose descendants may very well number in the millions today. For Heber, going forward even when he felt he had little to give blessed him and many others.





2. We Are Defined by Decisions, Not Circumstances

Thomas B. Marsh ran away from home in New Hampshire at age 14. He worked as a farm laborer in Vermont; as a waiter in Albany, New York; at a hotel in New York City; then as a servant on Long Island. His circumstances were unstable until he met and married Elizabeth Godkin.

He and Elizabeth were eventually led by the Spirit to western New York. There, they heard about the Book of

Mormon. Thomas saw copies of the first 16 pages as they came off the press, and the printer allowed him to read the proof sheet. Believing the book to be of God, Thomas chose to join the Church. He was baptized on September 3, 1830.³

Thomas preached the gospel in various areas. He endured tribulation when the Saints were ejected from Jackson County, Missouri, in November 1833. He was an original member of the Missouri high council when it

was organized in July 1834. After his calling as an Apostle at age 34, he served as President of the Quorum of the Twelve. Though he had earnestly defended Joseph Smith against dissenters in the past, Thomas himself eventually became disillusioned. In 1838 he chose to leave the Church.⁴

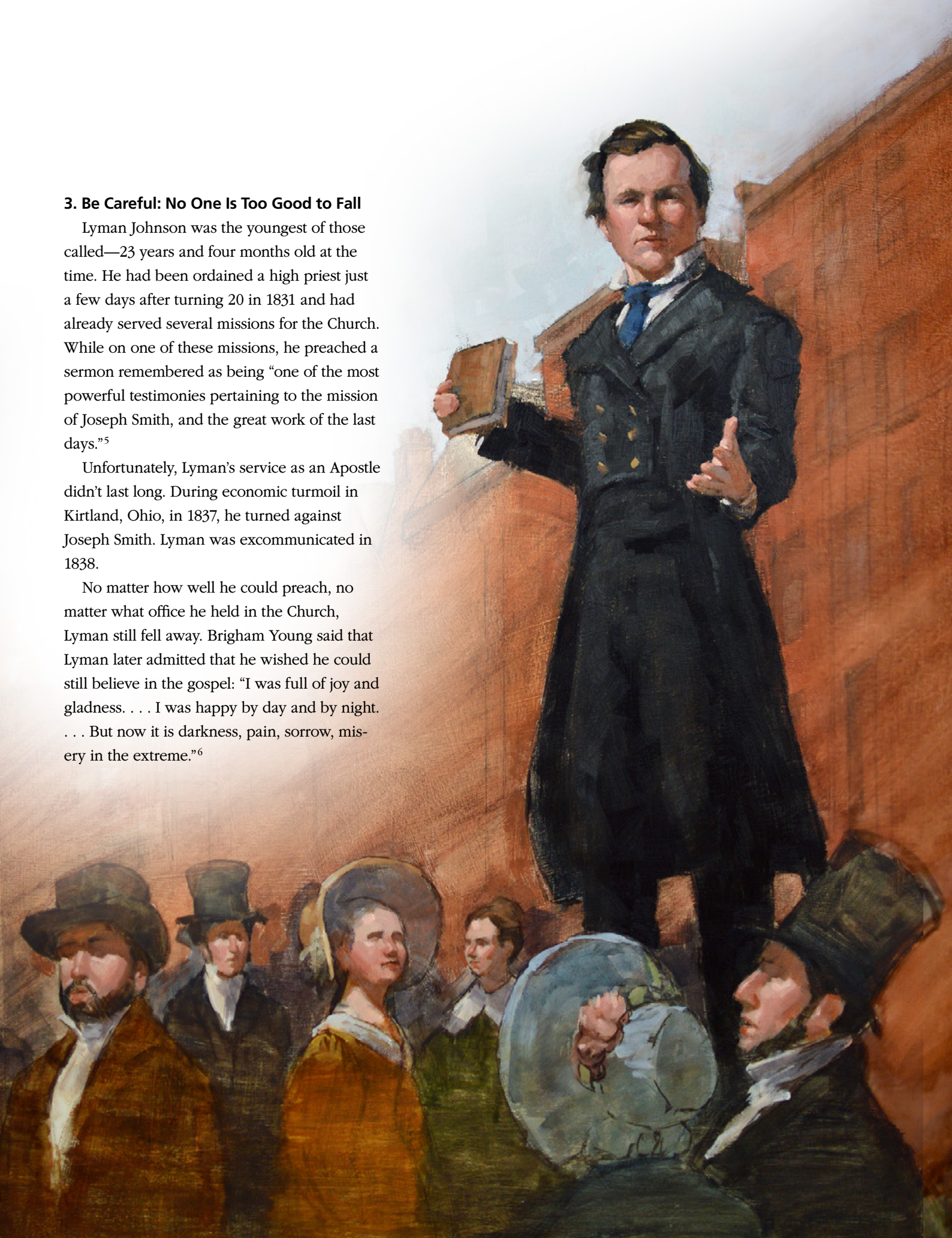
From Thomas Marsh we can learn that unstable circumstances don't need to keep us from the blessings of the gospel—or from blessing the lives of others.

3. Be Careful: No One Is Too Good to Fall

Lyman Johnson was the youngest of those called—23 years and four months old at the time. He had been ordained a high priest just a few days after turning 20 in 1831 and had already served several missions for the Church. While on one of these missions, he preached a sermon remembered as being “one of the most powerful testimonies pertaining to the mission of Joseph Smith, and the great work of the last days.”⁵

Unfortunately, Lyman’s service as an Apostle didn’t last long. During economic turmoil in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1837, he turned against Joseph Smith. Lyman was excommunicated in 1838.

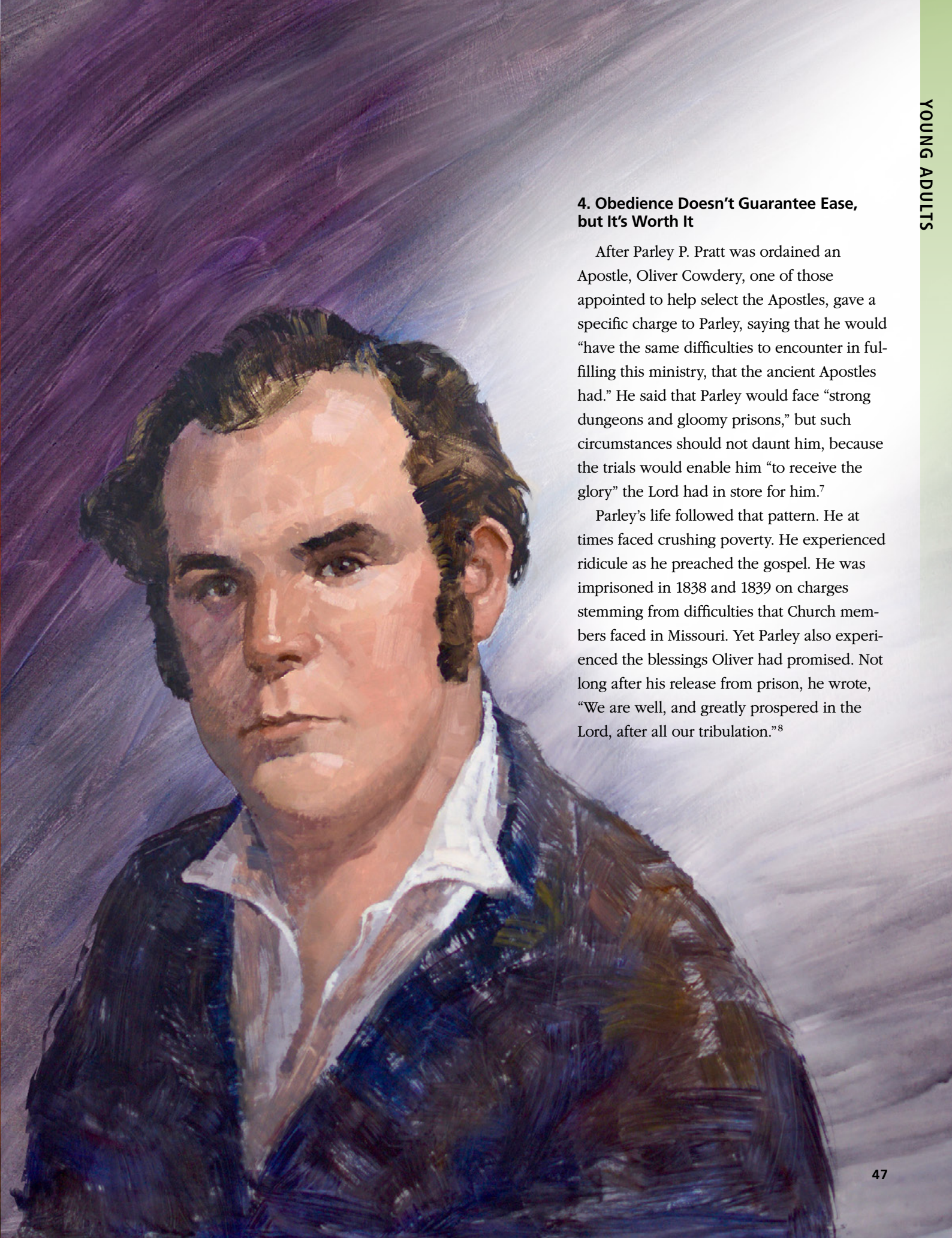
No matter how well he could preach, no matter what office he held in the Church, Lyman still fell away. Brigham Young said that Lyman later admitted that he wished he could still believe in the gospel: “I was full of joy and gladness. . . . I was happy by day and by night. . . . But now it is darkness, pain, sorrow, misery in the extreme.”⁶



4. Obedience Doesn't Guarantee Ease, but It's Worth It

After Parley P. Pratt was ordained an Apostle, Oliver Cowdery, one of those appointed to help select the Apostles, gave a specific charge to Parley, saying that he would “have the same difficulties to encounter in fulfilling this ministry, that the ancient Apostles had.” He said that Parley would face “strong dungeons and gloomy prisons,” but such circumstances should not daunt him, because the trials would enable him “to receive the glory” the Lord had in store for him.⁷

Parley's life followed that pattern. He at times faced crushing poverty. He experienced ridicule as he preached the gospel. He was imprisoned in 1838 and 1839 on charges stemming from difficulties that Church members faced in Missouri. Yet Parley also experienced the blessings Oliver had promised. Not long after his release from prison, he wrote, “We are well, and greatly prospered in the Lord, after all our tribulation.”⁸



5. Age Doesn't Matter as Much as Faith

Orson Pratt, Parley's brother, was the second youngest of the Apostles. Ordained at 23, he was only a few weeks older than Lyman Johnson. The service that Orson had already rendered to the Church provides an excellent example of how young adults can be a force for good.

Orson was baptized on September 19, 1830—his 19th birthday. Shortly after, Joseph Smith received a revelation for him that said that Orson was God's son, that he was blessed because he believed, and that his responsibility was to preach the gospel (see D&C 34:3–6). Accordingly, Orson served numerous missions, including one with Lyman Johnson in 1832 in which they baptized nearly 100 individuals and ordained several elders.

When Orson was called as an Apostle, he was not in Kirtland.

On April 23, 1835, in the city of Columbus, he learned that his presence was required at a meeting in Kirtland on April 26th.

Not knowing the purpose of the meeting, he immediately made his way there. Unaware that he had been called as an Apostle, he walked in while the congregation was “praying, and wishing for his arrival.”⁹ Feeling the support of the Saints, Orson accepted his call.

As an Apostle, he prepared a pamphlet that contained the earliest printed account of Joseph Smith's First Vision. As a pioneer in 1847, he kept a detailed record of the trek west. He also wrote many missionary pamphlets and was a strong defender of the Book of Mormon.

Today Is Different . . . Or Is It?

In many ways, young adults *are* different today than they were in 1835.

And yet these lessons can help young adults today in their efforts to live up to their potential. Here's a summary:

- If you feel inadequate, move forward anyway.
- Everyone has challenges. You can overcome yours.
- You'll be happier if you stay active in the Church.
- Stay committed. Be obedient and faithful. Blessings will come.
- You've got something important to give. The Lord is counting on you. ■

NOTES

1. “Extracts from H. C. Kimball's Journal,” *Times and Seasons*, Apr. 15, 1845, 868.
2. “Minutes, Discourse, and Blessings, 14–15 February 1835,” in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 4: April 1834–September 1835*, ed. Matthew C. Godfrey and others (2016), 229.
3. See “History of Thos. Baldwin Marsh,” *The Deseret News*, Mar. 24, 1858, 18.
4. See “History of Thos. Baldwin Marsh,” *The Deseret News*, Mar. 24, 1858, 18; Kay Darowski, “The Faith and Fall of Thomas Marsh,” in *Revelations in Context: The Stories behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants*, Matthew McBride and James Goldberg, eds. (2016), 57–59.
5. Edward W. Tullidge, *Tullidge's Histories* (1889), vol. 2 (supplement), 175.
6. Brigham Young, Discourse, June 17, 1877, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:41.
7. Oliver Cowdery, in “Minutes and Blessings, 21 February, 1835,” in *Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 4: April 1834–September 1835*, 240–41.
8. “Letter from Parley P. Pratt, 22 November 1839,” josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-parley-p-pratt-22-november-1839/1.
9. “Extracts from H. C. Kimball's Journal,” *Times and Seasons*, Apr. 15, 1845, 869.

