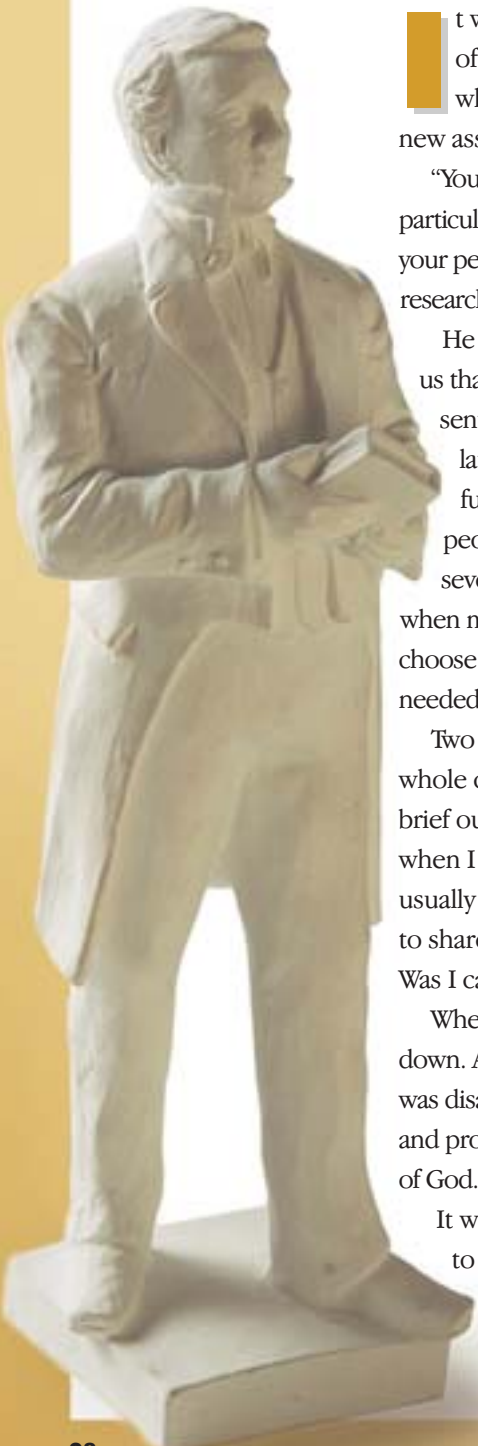


O F G R E P O R T



It was near the end of the first semester of my sophomore year in high school when my English teacher announced a new assignment to the class.

“You will each be doing a research paper on a particular person,” he stated. “You may choose your person, but you will need to do some research on them, so they must be real people.”

He passed around the guidelines and told us that we were to give brief preliminary presentations in two days, and then, two weeks later, we were to present our papers in full. We brainstormed different ideas for people to report on, and my list included several great presidents and authors. But when my teacher mentioned that we could also choose “great religious leaders,” I knew that I needed to do my paper on Joseph Smith.

Two days later, I had to get up and tell the whole class who I was reporting on and give a brief outline of who he was. I felt so shaky when I got up to speak, even though I am usually a good public speaker. I was terrified to share my knowledge about Joseph Smith. Was I casting pearls before swine?

When my brief presentation was over, I sat down. And even though everyone applauded, I was disappointed in my inability to speak clearly and proudly about a man I knew was a prophet of God. My throat had been tight the entire time.

It was then that I realized that if I wanted to teach my class the truth about Joseph Smith, I needed to learn more about him for myself and truly come to know who he was.

I began researching the life of Joseph Smith at home, first in *Joseph Smith—History*, and then in an institute manual called *Church History in the Fulness of Times*. I found out many things concerning the life, First Vision, and martyrdom of Joseph Smith. After days of study and prayer I began to realize just how great a man Joseph Smith really was, and my testimony of him was greatly strengthened. As I began writing my report, my heart and mind were full of a greater knowledge of Joseph Smith, which gave me courage as I typed out my report. I titled my report “Joseph Smith: Seeker of Truth, Defender of Righteousness.” My heart swells with the power and truth in that title, even to this day.

The night before my project was due, I called the missionaries to ask them if I should tell my class about Joseph Smith’s First Vision and was comforted by their words of encouragement and approval. They even said that they would pray for me in my efforts.

The next day in class, I said many silent prayers—prayers for the Spirit to be there, prayers for me not to be weak in my speech, prayers for me to convey the power of my message through my voice. Finally, my name was called, and I got up to give my presentation.

I gathered my courage and told my classmates all about Joseph Smith’s search for truth and his First Vision. I recounted how the Prophet was persecuted throughout his life and even martyred for his testimony, but how he could not deny what he knew. The Spirit was very strong in the room as I ended by

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Who would have thought that a class project would help me come to know the Prophet Joseph Smith?

bearing my testimony that if we want to find out the truth of something, all we have to do is ask God with real intent.

When I was done, I sat down and silently thanked my Heavenly Father for the strong presence of the Spirit and for the strength that He put into my words. At the end of class, my teacher asked if there were any students who wanted to leave their reports for his other classes in the coming years, and I decided to leave mine, asking for the Spirit to be with those who would read it.

Now I realize that even if no one in that class joins the Church or changes their opinion about the Prophet Joseph Smith, my testimony was strengthened because I stood “as [a witness] of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9). **NE**

I knew I had to learn all I could about the Prophet Joseph before I could share my testimony with the class.

