

Lesson  
**18**

# Membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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**Purpose**

To help class members gain a greater appreciation for membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and to encourage them to participate in the Church's mission, which is to invite all to "come unto Christ" (Moroni 10:32).

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**Preparation**

1. Prayerfully study John 3:3–5; Acts 2:38; 2 Nephi 2:6–8; 3 Nephi 27:13–20; Doctrine and Covenants 1:30; 123:12; 128:15; 131:1–4; Articles of Faith 1:4.
2. For each class member, prepare a set of the following wordstrips:

Proclaiming	the gospel
Perfecting	our lives
Redeeming	our dead

Place each set of wordstrips in a separate envelope, withholding one wordstrip from each set. Then place each wordstrip you have withheld into one of the other envelopes. Ensure that each envelope lacks one wordstrip but has two of another wordstrip (see the activity on page 100).

3. Materials needed: A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

*Note to the teacher*

*The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on the earth. As members of the Church, we learn the gospel, receive saving ordinances, and make covenants related to those ordinances. Remind class members that the Church provides us with opportunities to grow and to serve with fellowship, support, and inspiration. The mission of this divinely revealed organization is to invite all people to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32).*

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**Suggested Lesson Development**

**The True Church of Jesus Christ**

**Discussion**

- Often in testimony meetings Latter-day Saints say that they know the Church is true. What does this mean?

After class members have discussed this question, read the following statement:

"The church is the organized body of believers who have taken upon themselves the name of Jesus Christ by baptism and confirmation. To be the true church it must be the Lord's church, and must have his laws, his name, and be governed by him through representatives whom he has appointed" (Bible Dictionary, "Church," 645).

Testify that although other churches teach some truths and do many good things, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only *true* church on the earth because it is the only church that has the complete gospel of Jesus Christ and the priesthood authority to perform ordinances in the name of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus' Church. It has his name and his law, and it is led by his appointed representatives. Express your gratitude for Joseph Smith, the prophet through whom the Lord restored the true Church.

Scripture

Tell class members that Jesus Christ himself testified that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true. Have class members read and mark Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.

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### The Church Strengthens and Unites Us

Story and discussion

Show the drawing of flying geese found at the end of the lesson (page 104).

- Some birds, like geese, migrate to different climates for summer and winter. Why do you think geese fly together in a V-formation when they migrate?

Relate the following in your own words:

Scientists have studied why geese fly in a V-formation when they migrate, and they have found that flying this way is easier on the birds than flying alone. The first bird must fly against the full strength of the wind, but each succeeding bird in the formation has less air resistance to push against. Since the birds take turns being the leader (and having the hardest flight), they can fly longer without getting tired. The geese also honk to encourage each other to keep going.

When a goose gets sick or wounded and has to land, two other geese land with it. They stay with the injured bird until it dies or gains enough strength to fly again. Then they catch up with their flock. (Adapted from Harvey O. Bennett's address to Phi Theta Kappa, 5 May 1990. Used by permission of the Los Angeles County Office of Education.)

- How is the V-formation of the geese like the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? How are we, as members of the Church, like the individual geese that fly in the formation?

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### The Mission of the Church

Teacher presentation

Explain that the Church is the organization through which the Lord accomplishes his purposes. Through the Church, truth is taught and people are united in love and in their desire to serve the Lord.

Quotations and chalkboard discussion

- How does the Church help us receive the blessings of the plan of salvation?

After class members have had a chance to share some of their ideas, read the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson, thirteenth President of the Church:

"The mission of the Church is glorious—to invite all of us to come unto Christ through proclaiming the gospel, perfecting our lives, and redeeming our dead" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 98; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 85).

Write on the chalkboard *Proclaiming the Gospel*.

- Why is it important to preach the gospel? (See 2 Nephi 2:6–8; D&C 123:12.)

You may want to invite class members whose family members have served or are serving full-time missions to talk about the blessings that come through proclaiming the gospel.

- How can we help proclaim the gospel even though we are not full-time missionaries?

Write on the chalkboard *Perfecting Our Lives*.

- What are some of the ordinances we need to gain exaltation? (For some examples, see John 3:3–5; Acts 2:38; D&C 131:1–4.)
- What are the basic principles of the gospel? (See 3 Nephi 27:13–20; Articles of Faith 1:4.)
- How do priesthood ordinances, covenants, and instruction in gospel principles help us progress toward perfection?

Testify that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only church where we can receive priesthood ordinances, make covenants with the Lord, and be instructed in the fulness of the gospel.

Write on the chalkboard *Redeeming Our Dead*.

- How do we help redeem the dead? (By doing work in the temple, such as being baptized for the dead, and by doing work in family history to find the names of ancestors who need to receive ordinances through temple work.)
- Why is it important to do temple work for the dead? (See D&C 128:15.)
- How can doing temple work for the dead help us grow spiritually?

To conclude the discussion, read the following statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley, fifteenth President of the Church:

“We are all in this great endeavor together. We are here to assist our Father in His work and His glory, ‘to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man’ (Moses 1:39). Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence. All of us in the pursuit of our duty touch the lives of others” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 94; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 71).

- How does it make you feel to know that you can “assist [Heavenly] Father in His work and His glory”? How might this knowledge change the way we serve in the Church?

#### Activity

Erase the words you have written on the chalkboard, and tell class members that you are going to test their memories. Give each of them one of the envelopes you have prepared. Then have each of them organize their wordstrips to display the mission of the Church. Class members will soon find that they cannot fulfill that assignment with the wordstrips they have in their envelopes. When they have

discovered this, tell them that they will have to work together. Invite them to share their wordstrips with each other until each person can display the mission of the Church. When they have completed the exercise, ask the following questions:

- How is this exercise like membership in the Church? (We need to work together to fulfill the mission of the Church. We need each other's help.)
- What can we do to work together more effectively to fulfill the mission of the Church?

### Being True to the Church

#### Story

Share the following experience of a young Latter-day Saint doctor:

“I did not realize how much the Church had done for me until I left my home and went to study at a large medical university. I feared I could not keep up with the other students. There were only four Mormons in the entire class, but we all soon found out that we had an advantage over most of the others because of the opportunities the Church had given us. We were not afraid to stand in front of our classes and give reports. We could work well with our classmates and teachers because we had taken part in Church activities that had given us these skills. We did well in our studies because we had learned that help is always near, through prayer.

“We discovered, too, how much we meant to each other. We were suddenly among people with many different beliefs and ways of life, and it was important to us to have friends who believed as we did, friends who knew the way our Father in Heaven wants us to live. We did not want to follow the temptations of the world, and we needed each other.

“I am so grateful for all the Church has done for me as a person, when I didn't even know that it was happening” (in *Walk in His Ways: Basic Manual for Children, Part A* [1982], 76).

#### Discussion

- How has the Church helped you?
- How can we show that membership in the Church is important to us?

#### Quotation

Ask class members to think about what their words and actions say about their feelings about the Church. Then read the following statement by President Joseph F. Smith, sixth President of the Church:

“My standing in the Church is worth more to me than this life—ten thousand times. For in this I have life everlasting” (quoted by Joseph Fielding Smith, in *The Progress of Man* [1964], 450).

#### Testimony

After reading President Smith's testimony, bear your own testimony about the importance of the Church in your life.

Encourage class members to look for ways they can participate in the mission of the Church, and encourage them to show by their words and actions that they are thankful to be members of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

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## Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. Drop a pebble into a bucket of water. Help class members see that the pebble, though small, creates ripples in the water that extend out to the edges of the bucket.
  - How is this like our membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? (Just as the pebble affects the water all around it, we can affect many people around us by serving faithfully in the Church.)
2. If *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Video Presentations* (53912) is available, show “Organization of the Church,” an eight-minute segment.
3. Tell class members that the establishment of the Church on the earth in the last days was prophesied by an Old Testament prophet. Then read or tell the following story, which is from Daniel 2:

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a dream and was troubled because he did not know its meaning. When his magicians and sorcerers could not relate the dream or interpret it, the king was angry and commanded that they be killed. But then Daniel, a captive Hebrew who had found favor with the king, stated that if the king would give him time, he would reveal and interpret the dream.

Daniel went to his house and asked God for help, and God revealed to him the dream and its interpretation. Later, in the presence of King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel said that God could reveal secrets and make dreams known and understood. He said that the king had dreamed of a great image. The head of the image was gold, the breast and arms were silver, the belly and thighs were brass, and the legs were iron. The feet were made of a mixture of iron and clay. A stone cut out of a mountain without hands hit the image at the feet, breaking it to pieces. Daniel said, “The stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:35).

Daniel also gave the interpretation of the dream. The head of gold represented King Nebuchadnezzar and his powerful kingdom. Lesser kingdoms that were to follow and that would eventually become weak were represented by the other parts of the image. But in the last days “the God of heaven [would] set up a kingdom, which [would] never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44). That kingdom—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—was represented in the dream by the stone (see D&C 65:2).

Have class members read and mark Daniel 2:44–45.

Display the picture *Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream* (62531; Gospel Art Picture Kit 115), and discuss the parts of the picture.

- Which kingdom will consume all other kingdoms? (See Daniel 2:44; D&C 65:2).
- How long will that kingdom stand? (See Daniel 2:44.)

- How is Daniel's prophecy being fulfilled today? How are we a part of the fulfillment of the prophecy?

Read the following statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley:

"The little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands is rolling forth to fill the earth (see D&C 65:2). What a wonderful thing it is to be a part of this growing kingdom of our Lord. There are no political boundaries separating the hearts of the children of God, regardless of where they may live. We are all of one great family. We are sons and daughters of God. We are engaged in the service of His Beloved Son. He is our Redeemer and our Savior, and a testimony of this truth burns within our hearts. Each is entitled to such a testimony of this work. It is an individual knowledge of great fundamental truths that binds us together into what we call the church and kingdom of God" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 3; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 4–5).

