

**Purpose** To help class members understand that perfection is not an instant event but a goal we must strive for throughout our lives.

**Preparation**

1. Prayerfully study Matthew 5:48; 24:13; Luke 13:32; 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27; Moroni 10:32; Articles of Faith 1:4.
2. Additional reading: Address given by Elder Russell M. Nelson in the October 1995 general conference (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 115–18; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 86–88).
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* Many people find the commandment “be ye perfect” to be overwhelming. Youth especially can get discouraged easily when they make mistakes. They may feel that perfection is unattainable and thus not worth working toward. We all need to realize that perfection in this life is not expected or even possible. What is expected is that we try each day to be better than we were the day before. Help class members understand that they will someday reach perfection if they strive for it as best they can from day to day.

**Suggested Lesson Development**

**Perfection Is Our Goal**

Chalkboard activity Write the following scrambled letters on the chalkboard (you may want to use the first enrichment activity in place of this chalkboard activity):

*N R E T O I E P C F*

Ask class members to unscramble the letters to discover the subject of today’s lesson. Give only a few minutes for this activity. When class members have guessed the word or time has run out, write the unscrambled letters on the chalkboard:

*PERFECTION*

Scripture discussion Have class members find and mark Matthew 5:48. Have a class member read the verse aloud.

- What does it mean to you to be perfect?
- How do you feel about being commanded to be perfect?

Explain that many people feel overwhelmed and discouraged when they read this verse of scripture, because they feel it is impossible to become perfect.

Have class members find and read footnote *b* to Matthew 5:48. Explain that the Greek word which has been translated as “perfect” more accurately means “complete, finished, fully developed.” Becoming perfect does not mean never making a mistake. It means repenting of our sins and learning from our mistakes and working to become complete, fully developed, righteous people, like our Father in Heaven and Jesus Christ. Becoming this kind of person is not an event that happens all at once; it is a process that we must work at all our lives.

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### Jesus Christ Is Our Model for Perfection

Scripture  
discussion

Have class members read and mark 3 Nephi 12:48 and compare it to Matthew 5:48. Point out that both verses contain words spoken by Jesus Christ.

- How is 3 Nephi 12:48 different from Matthew 5:48? (3 Nephi 12:48 refers to the perfection of Jesus Christ as well as the perfection of our Father in Heaven.)

Explain that Matthew 5:48 was spoken while Jesus was alive on the earth, while 3 Nephi 12:48 was spoken during Jesus’ visit to the Nephites after his Resurrection. Although Jesus was without sin, he did not become perfect—complete, finished, fully developed—until after he was resurrected (see Luke 13:32; see also the conference address by Elder Nelson listed in the “Preparation” section). Likewise, we will not be perfected until after we are resurrected. But our Father in Heaven and our Savior expect us to begin the process of perfection while we are on the earth and to make a sincere daily effort toward becoming perfect.

Explain that as the first person to be resurrected and become perfect, Jesus Christ set an example for us to follow. Have class members find and mark the last two sentences of 3 Nephi 27:27 (from *Therefore* to the end of the verse). Have a class member read these sentences aloud.

- What does this verse suggest about how we begin to work toward perfection? (We work toward perfection by becoming as much like Christ as possible.)

Have class members find and read Moroni 10:32.

- According to this verse, what must we do to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him”? (“Deny [ourselves] of all ungodliness, and love God with all [our] might, mind and strength.”)

Explain that “deny yourselves of all ungodliness” means “give up your sins.” We must strive to give up our sins and demonstrate that we love God with all our might, mind, and strength. If we do this throughout our lives, then Jesus Christ, through his Atonement, will help us become perfect.

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### How Can I Direct My Life toward Perfection?

Chalkboard  
discussion

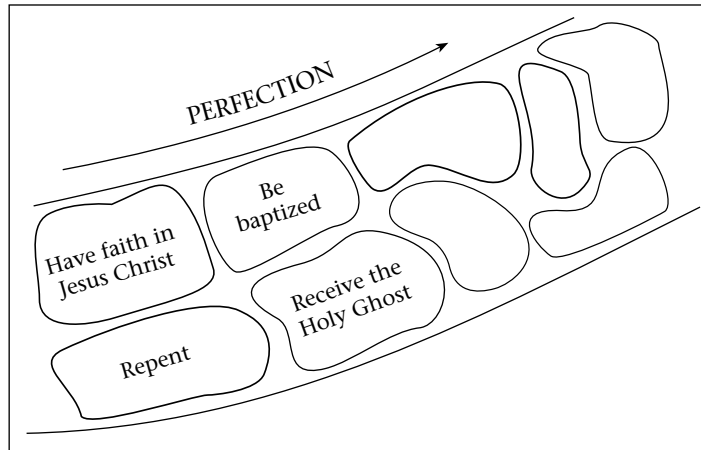
On the chalkboard draw a pathway with many stepping-stones (see the illustration on the following page). Explain that this pathway represents the process of working toward perfection. Write *Perfection* at the top of the pathway.

Remind class members that while perfection cannot be entirely achieved in this life, we can make great progress toward it. The Lord expects us to do all

we can toward giving up our sins and becoming perfect, and he has given us the gospel to help us do this.

- According to the fourth article of faith, what are the first principles and ordinances of the gospel?

Write *Have faith in Jesus Christ*, *Repent*, *Be baptized*, and *Receive the Holy Ghost* on four stepping-stones at the beginning of the path.



#### Discussion

- How does faith in Jesus Christ help us grow toward perfection? (We can follow his example as the one perfect person. He also makes repentance and baptism effective in our lives.)
- How can repentance help us progress? (When we repent, we abandon our sins, which keep us from improving and progressing.)
- How does baptism help make perfection possible? (We can be forgiven of our sins after we have been baptized. Also, through baptism we become members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has been organized to help us learn and do what Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ want us to do.)
- How can receiving the Holy Ghost help us grow and progress? (We can seek and follow his promptings. These promptings will always lead us to right actions.)

Chalkboard activity Have each class member, in turn, think of and write on a stepping-stone another gospel principle that helps us move toward perfection.

Examples:

Pray  
Keep the Word of Wisdom  
Honor the Sabbath  
Be honest  
Be dependable  
Sustain leaders  
Study the scriptures  
Serve others

Teacher  
presentation

Point out that perfection is a very individual process. In one sense we are all on the same path, because we are all striving to become like Jesus Christ. At the same time, however, our paths are very different. We have all been given different strengths and weaknesses, so the order in which we learn these principles of perfection and the time it takes to grow and develop in each one will vary widely. One person may be very faithful in keeping the Word of Wisdom but find it difficult to pay tithing, while another may find it easy to pay tithing but struggle for years to overcome selfishness.

Remind class members that because perfection is such an individual process, we should not become discouraged by comparing ourselves to other people. Nor should we criticize those who may not be as strong as we are in a particular area. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will not compare us to each other but will evaluate our progress according to our own individual capabilities and efforts.

Situations and  
discussion

Remind class members that perfection is not attained suddenly. When we feel overwhelmed at how far we seem to be from perfection, we can focus on learning and growing in one or two areas at a time. Using the following situations (or others applicable to class members), discuss how improving in individual areas of the gospel can help us move toward our ultimate goal of perfection.

1. Tim works part-time at his uncle's store.

- How can Tim progress toward perfection in the payment of tithes? How will Tim's attitude about tithing affect his progress?

Write *Pay tithing* on a stepping-stone.

2. Peggy's parents are active members of the Church, and they encourage her to live Church standards. Peggy often hears her friends speak disrespectfully of their parents and ignore their counsel.

- How can Peggy grow toward perfection in honoring her parents? How can honoring her parents help her progress in other areas?

Write *Honor parents* on a stepping-stone.

3. Elizabeth has set a goal to be more faithful in attending her Church meetings.

- How can this goal help Elizabeth progress toward perfection? What does Elizabeth need to do besides simply show up in order to reach her goal?

Write *Attend Church meetings* on a stepping-stone.

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### **We Must Endure to the End to Attain Perfection**

Scripture  
discussion

Have class members read and mark Matthew 24:13.

- What does it mean to "endure to the end"? (To remain faithful throughout our lives.)

Point out that enduring to the end does not mean reaching a certain level of progress and then simply maintaining that level. It means working every day to become a more righteous person.

Quotation	<p>Read or have a class member read the following statement from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:</p> <p>“Brothers and sisters, let us do the best we can and try to improve each day. When our imperfections appear, we can keep trying to correct them. We can be more forgiving of flaws in ourselves and among those we love. . . . We need not be dismayed if our earnest efforts toward perfection now seem so arduous and endless. Perfection . . . awaits all who love [the Lord] and keep his commandments” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 118; or <i>Ensign</i>, Nov. 1995, 88).</p>
Testimony	<p>Remind class members that while perfection cannot be completely achieved in this life, we are expected to begin the process and make a sincere effort to overcome our sins and become like Jesus Christ. Testify of the role of Christ and his Atonement in our eventual perfection.</p> <p>Remind class members not to become discouraged if perfection seems far away. Encourage each class member to choose one principle of the gospel and make a special effort this week to work toward perfection in that area.</p>

**Enrichment  
Activities**

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

1. You may want to use this activity in place of the chalkboard activity at the beginning of the lesson:

Write each of the letters *P E R F E C T I O N* on a small piece of paper. If you have more than ten class members, add blank pieces of paper until you have one piece of paper for each class member.

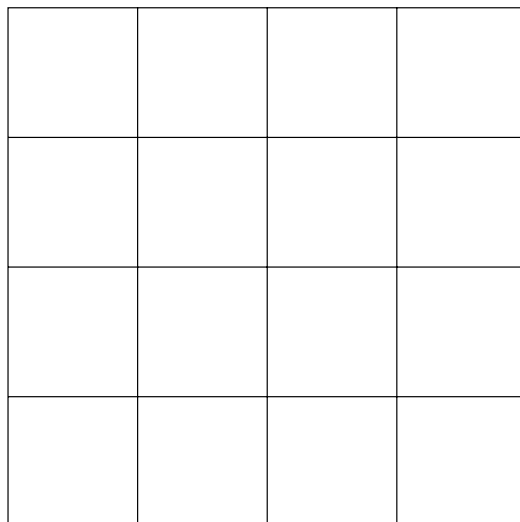
Pin or tape at least one piece of paper to the back of each class member. (If there are more than ten class members, some will have blank papers; if there are fewer than ten class members, some will have two or three letters on their backs.)

Allow class members to walk around the classroom and read each other's letters. Give them two or three minutes to figure out what word is spelled by the letters.

When class members have guessed the word or time has run out, collect all the pieces of paper and pin or tape them to a piece of posterboard or stiff paper so they spell the word *Perfection*.

2. Bring to class an item carved out of wood and a piece of rough wood, or an item carved out of stone and a rough stone or rock. Allow class members to hold and examine the two items (if you do not want class members to handle the items, instead display them in front of the class). Point out that the carved item was once a piece of raw material similar to the rough item. Explain that the carved item did not become beautiful or useful all at once; it had to be carefully and gradually shaped and polished by the person who made it. Likewise, we do not become perfect all at once. We gradually and carefully “shape” and “polish” ourselves by following Christ's example and striving to live his teachings.

3. Draw the following illustration on the chalkboard:



- How many squares are in this illustration?

Give class members an opportunity to count and give their answers, and then tell them that there are actually 30 squares in the illustration. Give class members a few more moments to find the 30 squares. If they cannot, point out the following squares:

1 square of the illustration as a whole

1 square containing four blocks, in the exact center of the illustration

4 squares containing four blocks each, one in each corner

4 squares containing four blocks each, one centered on each side

4 squares containing nine blocks each, one in each corner

16 squares containing one block each

- How many of you found all 30 squares the first time you looked at the illustration? How did you find all 30 squares?

Point out that just as finding all 30 squares may take a person several tries and help from others, attaining perfection in any area will take many attempts and help from family members, Church leaders, and Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. We may not do an activity or live a principle perfectly the first time we try it, but our abilities will improve as we continue to do the activity or live the principle. (If any class members were able to find all 30 squares the first time, congratulate them, but assure them that there will be many other areas in which perfection does not come so easily.)