

Be of Good Cheer

Lesson 39

Purpose To help class members avoid discouragement and follow the Savior's counsel to "be of good cheer" (John 16:33).

Preparation

1. Prayerfully study John 16:33; 1 Peter 1:7; 2 Nephi 2:17–18, 27; Ether 12:6; Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–9; 122:5–9.
2. Materials needed:
 - a. Two to four hymnbooks for the activity on page 231.
 - b. 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 *In our premortal life we shouted for joy because of the opportunity to progress to our second estate (see Job 38:4, 7). We were aware that during mortality we would experience sorrow, pain, disappointment, problems, and trials, as well as happiness and joy. With all this knowledge we felt peace and security, because we knew that our Father in Heaven would always be mindful of us. Help class members see Christ's admonition to "be of good cheer" as a reminder that, regardless of our circumstances, we can find peace and joy in life.*

Suggested Lesson Development

Trials Are Part of the Plan of Salvation

Discussion Ask class members to imagine that they are in the premortal existence and that they will soon be born on earth. They are talking with one another about what might happen to them, knowing that life on earth will bring many opportunities and challenges. Then read the statements below, one at a time, and have class members discuss their feelings about each statement as they prepare to come to earth.

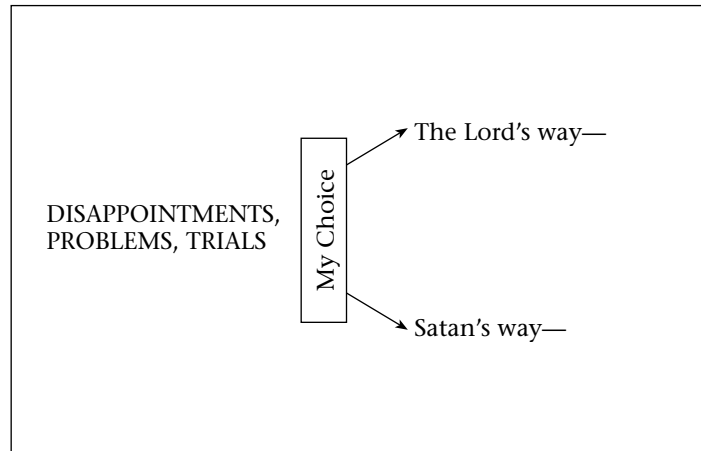
1. You will have disappointments, trials, and problems while in mortality.
2. You will also experience joy.
3. Satan will tempt you.
4. Our Father in Heaven wants you to succeed and be happy.

Scripture discussion Ask the following question, allowing class members to look up the accompanying scriptures to help them answer it:

- Why are disappointments, problems, and other trials part of the plan of salvation? (See 1 Peter 1:7; Ether 12:6; D&C 122:7.)

Chalkboard
presentation

Draw the following diagram on the chalkboard:



Point out that everyone experiences trials and disappointments. Much of our success in life depends on how we respond to trials. We can choose one of two basic responses to trials: the Lord's way or Satan's way.

Satan Wants Us to Be Discouraged

Quotation
and scripture
discussion

Read the following statement by Elder Marvin J. Ashton, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“One of Satan’s most powerful tools is discouragement” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 63).

Add *Be discouraged* to the chalkboard after *Satan’s way—*.

Have class members read and mark 2 Nephi 2:17–18, 27.

- How does discouragement help Satan accomplish his goal to make us “miserable like unto himself”? How are your efforts to obey the commandments and do well at school and in other activities affected when you are discouraged?

Read the continuation of Elder Ashton’s statement:

“Whisperings of ‘you can’t do it,’ ‘you’re no good,’ ‘it’s too late,’ ‘what’s the use?’ or ‘things are hopeless’ are tools of destruction. Satan . . . wants you to quit trying. It is important that discouragement is cast out of [our lives]. This may take a decided amount of work and energy, but it can be accomplished” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 63).

The Lord Has Taught Us to Be of Good Cheer

Quotation
and scripture
discussion

- What trials did the Savior experience?

Point out that the Savior suffered greater trials than we will ever experience, yet he did not get discouraged. Read the following statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

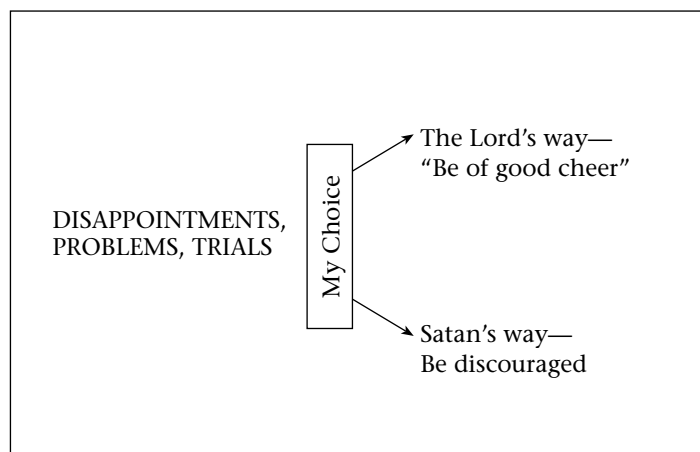
“Even with such a solemn mission given to Him, the Savior found delight in living; He enjoyed people and told His disciples to be of good cheer. . . .

“Remember the unkind treatment He received, the rejection He experienced, and the injustice . . . He endured. When we, too, then face some of that in life, we can remember that Christ was also troubled on every side, but not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed (see 2 Corinthians 4:8–9)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 90–91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 68–69).

Have class members read and mark John 16:33.

- How does the Lord want us to feel when we have disappointments, problems, and trials?

Add “*Be of good cheer*” to the chalkboard after *The Lord’s way*—. The chalkboard should now look like this:



- How has the Savior “overcome the world”?
- How does this knowledge help us “be of good cheer”?

We Can Be of Good Cheer Even in Difficult Times

Activity

Divide the class into four groups, with a leader for each group, and give each group a hymnbook. Assign each group one of the verses of the hymn “Count Your Blessings” (*Hymns*, no. 241; also printed below). If you have a small class, you may wish to divide into two groups and assign each group two verses. Have each group find the message of their verse (or verses). Encourage them to think of examples from scripture stories, Church history, or personal experiences that teach the same message. After each group has had time to think of ideas, have the leader read the verse to the class and then share the ideas the group discussed. (You may want to use the first enrichment activity in place of or in addition to this activity.)

“When upon life’s billows you are tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings; name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

“Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings; every doubt will fly,
And you will be singing as the days go by.

“When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you his wealth untold.
Count your many blessings; money cannot buy
Your reward in heaven nor your home on high.

“So amid the conflict, whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged; God is over all.
Count your many blessings; angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey’s end.”

Story and
discussion

Read the following story told by President Gordon B. Hinckley about the first few weeks of his mission in England. Have class members listen for things that helped him overcome discouragement.

“I was not well when I arrived. Those first few weeks, because of illness and the opposition which we felt, I was discouraged. I wrote a letter home to my good father and said that I felt I was wasting my time and his money. He was my father and my stake president, and he was a wise and inspired man. He wrote a very short letter to me which said, ‘Dear Gordon, I have your recent letter. I have only one suggestion: forget yourself and go to work.’ Earlier that morning in our scripture class my companion and I had read these words of the Lord: ‘Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.’ (Mark 8:35.)

“Those words of the Master, followed by my father’s letter with his counsel to forget myself and go to work, went into my very being. With my father’s letter in hand, I went into our bedroom in the house at 15 Wadham Road, where we lived, and got on my knees and made a pledge with the Lord. I covenanted that I would try to forget myself and lose myself in His service.

“That July day in 1933 was my day of decision. A new light came into my life and a new joy into my heart. The fog of England seemed to lift, and I saw the sunlight. I had a rich and wonderful mission experience, for which I shall ever be grateful” (“Gospel to Great Britain,” *Ensign*, July 1987, 7).

- What are some things that helped Elder Hinckley overcome discouragement? What other things have helped you overcome discouragement?

List class members’ answers on the chalkboard under “*Be of good cheer.*” Answers should include the following:

Follow the counsel of parents
Read the scriptures
Forget ourselves (be selfless)
Give service
Pray

Scripture
discussion

Explain that the Prophet Joseph Smith faced trials even greater than those Elder Hinckley experienced in England. During a particularly difficult time, when Joseph was a prisoner in the jail at Liberty, Missouri, he cried to God, asking how long God would permit the Saints to be persecuted (see D&C 121:1–6).

Have class members read the Lord’s reply to Joseph’s prayer in Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–9 and 122:5–9. Encourage them to mark words and phrases in these verses that they feel are important.

- Which words or phrases did you mark? Why did you mark them?
- What does it mean that “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good”? (D&C 122:7). How have you seen that trials can be for our good?
- How do you think Joseph Smith felt when he was told, “Fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever”? (D&C 122:9). How can this promise help you overcome discouragement? How can we be worthy of this promise?

Testimony

As appropriate, tell about a time when the Lord helped you overcome feelings of discouragement. Testify that as we follow the Savior, we will be able to “be of good cheer,” even during difficult times.

Encourage class members to respond to trials by being of good cheer. Refer again to the list on the chalkboard of ways to overcome discouragement, and encourage class members to do one or more of these things if they feel discouraged this week.

Enrichment Activities

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

1. Give each class member a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Ask class members to list on their papers at least three blessings they have. Help them understand that gratitude helps bring true happiness. Suggest that they take time to list some of their blessings the next time they become discouraged. This will help them “be of good cheer” by reminding them of how good life actually is.
2. Give each class member a copy of the scripture-matching activity on page 234. Have class members draw a line from each scripture to its correct reference. Encourage them to mark the passages in their scriptures as they complete the exercise.
3. Prepare for each class member a card with the following statement on it (quoted by John Henry Evans, in *Joseph Smith, an American Prophet* [1946], 9):

“Never be discouraged. If I were sunk in the lowest pit of Nova Scotia, with the Rocky Mountains piled on me, I would hang on, exercise faith, and keep up good courage, and I would come out on top.” —Joseph Smith

Encourage class members to keep the cards where they can see them often. This will help class members remember to “be of good cheer,” even during difficult times.
4. Tell the story “Beyond the Mud” (LaDawn S. Dalley, *New Era*, Apr. 1996, 8–9). In this true story, a missionary’s love for the people she serves helps her overcome discouragement.

“Be of Good Cheer”

Draw a line from each scripture to its correct reference.

“Be of good cheer; it is I;
be not afraid.”

Psalm 100:2

“A merry heart maketh a
cheerful countenance.”

Matthew 14:27

“Be of good cheer, for I will lead
you along.”

Doctrine and
Covenants 78:18

“Lift up thy head and rejoice, for
thou hast great cause to rejoice;
for thou hast been faithful in
keeping the commandments.”

Proverbs 15:13

“Be of good cheer, and do not fear,
for I the Lord am with you, and will
stand by you.”

Doctrine and
Covenants 68:6

“In the world ye shall have tribulation:
but be of good cheer.”

Alma 8:15

“Serve the Lord with gladness.”

John 16:33