

Joseph Smith's Childhood

Lesson

4

Purpose To encourage each child to follow the example of Joseph Smith in being a good family member and following Jesus.

Preparation

1. Study Joseph Smith—History 1:1–12.
2. Prepare a piece of paper large enough to cover the picture of Joseph Smith. Cut the paper into several pieces, enough for one piece of the puzzle for every child. Place the cut paper over the picture of Joseph Smith until the picture cannot be seen. (For older children, write a fact about Joseph Smith on the back of each piece.)
3. Prepare the following wordstrips:

Obey

Serve

Love

Read scriptures

Pray

4. Prepare to sing “Love at Home” (*Hymns*, no. 294).
5. Prepare the following materials:
 - a. Tape.
 - b. Picture 3-6, The Prophet Joseph Smith (62002; Gospel Art Picture Kit 401); picture 3-7, The Joseph Smith Family; picture 3-8, Joseph Smith Seeks Wisdom in the Bible (Gospel Art Picture Kit 402); and picture 3-9, Jesus the Christ (62572; Gospel Art Picture Kit 240).
6. Make the necessary preparations for any enrichment activities that you will be using.

**Suggested
Lesson
Development**

Invite a child to give the opening prayer.

Follow up with the children if you encouraged them to do something during the last week.

Joseph Smith Had a Good Family

Attention activity

Show the children the covered picture of Joseph Smith. Tell them that the picture under the paper is of someone who loved Heavenly Father and followed

the teachings of Jesus Christ. Tell the children one of the following facts, and ask a child to remove one piece of paper from the covered picture. Repeat this process until all the pieces have been removed and the children can see the picture. (For a class of older children, you might want to write these facts on the back of the pieces of paper and have the children take turns removing a piece of paper and reading aloud the information on the back.)

Facts about Joseph Smith:

- He liked to play games.
- He had blue eyes.
- He was born on 23 December.
- His mother's name was Lucy.
- His family members were not rich, but they were happy.
- He was a hard worker.
- He was named after his father.
- He was honest.
- He was visited by angels.
- His wife's name was Emma.
- He was a strong man.

Then ask the children:

- Who is this?
- What else do you know about Joseph Smith?

If the children have questions about Joseph Smith, discuss them briefly. Explain that he was the first prophet and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was a very kind and loving person. Explain that the children will learn more about Joseph Smith in a future lesson.

Picture and story

Show the children picture 3-7, The Joseph Smith Family, and tell them the following about Joseph's childhood:

In the picture, Joseph Smith is the boy on the right in the white shirt. He had blue eyes and light brown hair. He had many brothers and sisters. Joseph was a cheerful, happy boy who liked to laugh, play ball, wrestle, slide on the ice, and play games.

When Joseph was young, his family held school at home because no school was located nearby. Later, Joseph and his brothers and sisters went to school, where they learned more about reading, writing, and mathematics.

Joseph's family cleared part of the land that they were buying and built a small log home south of Palmyra, New York. The log home had small glass windows and a wood plank floor. The rooms were heated by a large, stone fireplace located in the kitchen. The Smiths used light from a tin candlestick with a tall dip in it because there was no electricity. They planted wheat, corn, beans, and flax. Lucy Smith and her daughters used the flax to produce linen cloth. The men cleared the trees off of their land and set them aside to dry so they could burn them and sell the ashes to make soap. The Smiths made split-

wood chairs and baskets. Lucy said that they were able to build a comfortable though humble home that was “neatly furnished by [their] own industry.” (See Donald L. Enders, “A Snug Log House,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, pp. 14–22 and Dale L. Berge, “Archaeological Work at the Smith Log House,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, pp. 24–26.)

- How is your home like Joseph Smith’s?
- How is your home different from Joseph Smith’s?

Joseph Smith’s father did many things to make a living, including farming. Joseph worked hard with his father to grow grain, fruits, and vegetables. The family also raised cattle, hogs, and poultry. They made barrels, buckets, and brooms. Joseph’s mother and sisters worked hard cooking, sewing, cleaning, tending the younger children, making cheese and butter, and tending the kitchen, garden, and milk cows. One year the Smith family won a prize for producing the best quality maple syrup in the county.

- What kind of work does your family do together?
- What could you do to help your family?

When Joseph Smith was young, few hospitals and medicines were available. Doctors traveled to the homes of sick people to help them.

When Joseph Smith was a boy, he became very ill. Joseph’s leg became infected and swollen. It was very painful. The pain was worse when the doctor had to cut the leg open to clean out the infection. No hospital was nearby, so the operation had to be done in Joseph’s home. Joseph had no medicine to stop the pain during the operation, so he felt great pain.

The infection came back, and Joseph’s leg remained painful and swollen. Finally, the doctor decided that the leg was not going to heal; he thought that he would have to cut it off so that the infection would not spread to the rest of Joseph’s body and kill him. Of course, Joseph’s family was very worried. His mother prayed that something could be done to save the leg. Then she asked the doctor to try once more to cut out the infected area of the leg. The doctor agreed.

With no medicines to stop the pain, the doctor wanted Joseph to drink liquor to help him bear the pain. But Joseph would not drink it. The doctor wanted to tie Joseph to the bed so he wouldn’t kick during the operation. But Joseph chose not to be tied down. Instead, he chose to have his father hold him in his arms. Joseph asked his mother to go outside during the operation so she wouldn’t have to watch. He knew it would be hard on her and didn’t want to upset her.

During the long and painful operation, Joseph’s father held him tightly. When it was over, Joseph was weak and tired, but all the infection was gone. Joseph’s leg was saved.

- How did Joseph Smith show his family that he loved them? How did they show their love for him?
- How is your family like Joseph Smith’s?
- In what ways do you want to be like Joseph Smith?

Joseph Smith Obeyed Jesus Christ's Teachings

Wordstrip activity

Joseph Smith's family was probably like your family in many ways. They often prayed together. They often sang, went to church, and read the Bible together. They tried to obey Jesus' teachings.

Lay the wordstrips face up on the table or on the floor. Ask an older child to choose a wordstrip and say the word aloud or tape it on the chalkboard. Explain to the children that the wordstrips describe ways in which Joseph Smith followed Jesus' teachings. As each wordstrip is chosen, tell the children what Joseph did to follow that teaching and discuss how they can also follow Jesus Christ.

Obey. Joseph knew the Bible said, "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Exodus 20:12). Joseph honored his parents by being loving and obedient.

- What are some things we can do to show that we love and obey our parents?

Serve. Jesus taught that we should serve others. Joseph Smith was a good worker and always tried to do his share of the work without complaining. He served his family by being helpful and working hard.

- How have you served your family members this week?

Love. One of Joseph's best friends was his brother Hyrum, who was six years older than he was. All the brothers and sisters in Joseph's family played together often. They tried to show love for one another.

Sing or say the words to "Love at Home":

There is beauty all around
When there's love at home;
There is joy in ev'ry sound
When there's love at home.
Peace and plenty here abide,
Smiling sweet on ev'ry side.
Time doth softly, sweetly glide
When there's love at home.

- When did you last tell your parents that you love them? Your brothers and sisters?
- How do you show love to your family members?

Read scriptures. Joseph knew that the teachings of Jesus Christ are important. He often thought about Heavenly Father and Jesus. He wanted to learn more about them, so he often read in the Bible and prayed. Show picture 3-8, Joseph Smith Seeks Wisdom in the Bible.

- Why is reading the scriptures important?

Pray. When Joseph Smith was sick, his mother prayed to Heavenly Father for help. Heavenly Father answered her prayer and helped Joseph get well.

- What can you ask Heavenly Father to help you do?
- What else can you pray to Heavenly Father about?

Summary

Pictures	Show the children picture 3-6, The Prophet Joseph Smith. Also show them the CTR shield and remind them of their CTR rings. Tell the children that Joseph Smith is a good example of choosing the right. He was good to his family and obeyed the teachings of Jesus. Show picture 3-9, Jesus the Christ. When we choose the right we follow Jesus, just as Joseph Smith did.
Teacher testimony	Bear testimony that Joseph Smith loved his family and was a great prophet. He chose the right and served Heavenly Father. Invite a child to offer the closing prayer. Ask him or her to thank Heavenly Father for Joseph Smith's good example and to ask for help in remembering to follow that example this week.

Enrichment Activities

Choose from the following activities those that will work best for your children. You can use them in the lesson itself or as a review or summary. For additional guidance, see "Class Time" in "Helps for the Teacher."

1. Have the children choose one way they can follow Joseph Smith's example this week. As they are deciding, pass out pencils and paper. Have the children write their names and their choices at the top of the paper. Help them as needed. (For example, "I will be kind this week.") Then have them write or draw a picture showing what they have chosen to do to follow Joseph Smith's example.

Encourage the children to take their papers home to show their parents and to keep them in a place where they will see them often during the week.
2. Sing together "Choose the Right Way"; the words are included at the back of this manual.