

Joseph Smith Prepares to Receive the Gold Plates

Purpose

To encourage the children to prepare themselves to serve Jesus Christ and their fellowmen.

Preparation

1. Prayerfully study Joseph Smith—History 1:53–58 and the historical account given in this lesson. Then study the lesson and decide how you want to teach the children the scriptural and historical accounts. (See “Preparing Your Lessons,” pp. vi–vii, and “Teaching the Scriptural and Historical Accounts,” pp. vii–ix.)
2. Select the discussion questions and enrichment activities that will involve the children and best help them achieve the purpose of the lesson.
3. Materials needed:
 - a. A Pearl of Great Price for each child.
 - b. Six blank wordstrips and some pens or pencils.
 - c. Picture 5-8, Moroni Appears to Joseph Smith in His Room (Gospel Art Picture Kit 404; 62492); picture 5-9, Joseph Smith Uncovering the Gold Plates; picture 5-10, Joseph Smith Teaches His Family.

Suggested

Lesson

Development

Invite a child to give the opening prayer.

Attention Activity

Tell the children that you would like them to help you prepare some things for the lesson. Give some of the children blank wordstrips and pens or pencils, and have them write the following words on the wordstrips: *Joseph Smith, prayer, light, Moroni, message, four times*. Have another child display the picture of Moroni appearing to Joseph Smith.

Thank the children for helping you prepare.

- Why is it important that we prepare for certain events, such as taking a test in school or giving a talk in Primary? What happens when we do not prepare?

Using the wordstrips and the appropriate pictures, have the children help you review what they learned in lesson 3 about Moroni’s visits to Joseph Smith. Remind the children that Joseph was not allowed to take the plates the first time he saw them. Explain that Joseph had a great work to do, but he needed to be better prepared in order to do it. This lesson discusses some of his preparation for this great work.

Scriptural and Historical Accounts

Teach about Joseph Smith’s four-year preparation to receive the gold plates, as described in Joseph Smith—History 1:53–58 and the following historical account. Emphasize Joseph’s willingness to do everything Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ wanted him to do and the ways Joseph was prepared to do this work. Show the pictures at appropriate times.

Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, wrote that after the first visits of Moroni, "Joseph continued to receive instructions from the Lord, and we continued to get the children together every evening for the purpose of listening while he gave us a relation of the same. . . . During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode [method] of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them" (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 82–83). Because he had always been honest, Joseph Smith's parents and brothers and sisters believed all Joseph told them.

Two months after Moroni's first visits to Joseph, a great tragedy struck the Smith family. Joseph's oldest brother, Alvin, became ill and died. Joseph loved Alvin, and Alvin in turn had loved and supported his younger brother. Shortly before Alvin died, he gave Joseph some counsel to help him prepare to serve the Lord. Alvin said to Joseph: "I want you to be a good boy, and do everything that lies in your power to obtain the Record [the gold plates]. Be faithful in receiving instruction, and in keeping every commandment that is given you" (quoted in Smith, p. 87).

Discussion and Application Questions

Study the following questions and the scripture references as you prepare your lesson. Use the questions you feel will best help the children understand the scriptures and apply the principles in their lives. Reading and discussing the scriptures with the children in class will help them gain personal insights.

- How many years passed between the time Joseph first saw the gold plates and when he actually received them? (JS—H 1:53–54.) What happened each year on 22 September? How was the angel Moroni preparing Joseph for the work he had been called to do? Explain that during these four years, Joseph also met with many other Nephite prophets, such as Nephi, Alma, Mormon, and the twelve disciples chosen by the Savior in America (see *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, p. 41). Why did these ancient prophets visit Joseph?
- Why did Joseph Smith's family believe and support him? Point out that Joseph had always been honest and dependable, and his family knew they could believe him. Why do you think family support was important to Joseph? What are some ways you support the members of your family? How do they support you? How can we help the members of our families follow the teachings of the Savior? How do your family members help you follow the Savior?
- How did Joseph Smith help his family? (JS—H 1:55.) How do you think learning to work hard helped prepare Joseph to serve the Lord? What are some ways you work in your family? Why should we be willing to work in our homes and yards to help our families? How will learning to work and take on responsibilities help us serve the Lord?
- How are you preparing now for work that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ may want you to do in the future? (See enrichment activity 1.)
- Point out that Joseph Smith was true to his testimony and lived the gospel in spite of the persecution he received from other people. How did this help prepare Joseph for the great work he was to do? Why should we decide now to always obey the teachings of the gospel? How will this help prepare us to serve in the Church? (See enrichment activity 2.)

Enrichment Activities

You may use one or more of the following activities any time during the lesson or as a review, summary, or challenge.

1. Write the headings *Heavenly Father helps me prepare by:* and *I can prepare myself by:* on the chalkboard (or post wordstrips you have prepared in advance).
 - What have Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ given us to help us prepare to serve them? (Answers may include scriptures, parents, prophets, teachers, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and Primary.) Write the children's answers to this question under the heading *Heavenly Father helps me prepare by:*.
 - What is our responsibility to help prepare ourselves? Using the items listed on the chalkboard, discuss with the children what each of us needs to do with the things that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have given us (for example: scriptures—study them daily; parents—follow their counsel). Summarize their answers under the heading *I can prepare myself by:*.
 - What are we preparing to do? (Serve Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and others, in positions such as teacher, missionary, or parent.) How does this preparation help us now? How will it help us in the future? Help the children realize their responsibility to prepare themselves now to serve.
2. Explain to the children that one way they can prepare to serve Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is to decide now that they will always obey the commandments, even when temptations and problems come. Write on the chalkboard *I can decide now to:*. Have the children think of things they can decide to do now in order to follow the Savior and prepare to serve him. Write their responses on the chalkboard.

Give each child a piece of paper and a pencil or pen, and have the children write on their papers the heading *I can decide now to:* followed by one item from the list on the chalkboard. Invite the children to discuss their papers with their families and then put the papers somewhere they can see them often.
3. Write on separate pieces of paper some of the things Joseph Smith learned to do as he prepared to serve the Lord, such as have faith, be obedient, be prayerful, study the scriptures, and trust in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Have each child in turn choose a paper and read it to the class. Have the children discuss ways in which they can learn to do these same things.
4. Sing or say the words to "Keep the Commandments" (*Children's Songbook*, p. 146), "Teach Me to Walk in the Light" (*Children's Songbook*, p. 177), or "I Know My Father Lives" (*Children's Songbook*, p. 5).
5. Draw a tic-tac-toe diagram on the chalkboard. Fill the spaces with the numbers 1 through 9:

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

Divide the children into two teams, and assign each team a symbol (such as X and O). Alternating between teams, have the children take turns choosing numbers and answering the questions that correspond with those numbers. If a child answers a question correctly, let him or her replace the question number with the team's symbol. When a team gets three in a row, you may want to rearrange the numbers on the diagram and play the game again.

Possible questions:

1. How many years passed between Moroni's first visits and Joseph's receiving the plates? (Four.)
2. In what hill were the gold plates hidden? (Cumorah.)
3. Whom did Joseph marry? (Emma Hale.)
4. Name one thing Joseph described to his family about the people in the Book of Mormon. (Their dress, mode of travel, animals, cities, warfare, or religious worship.)
5. Which of Joseph's brothers died in 1823? (Alvin.)
6. Name two Nephite prophets who visited Joseph Smith while he was preparing to receive the gold plates. (Nephi, Alma, Mormon, Moroni.)
7. What kind of work did Joseph do on the Smith farm? (Plant crops, harvest crops, cut down trees, make maple syrup.)
8. How did other people in the community treat Joseph after the First Vision? (They disbelieved and persecuted him.)
9. Who met Joseph Smith at the Hill Cumorah each year for four years? (The angel Moroni.)

Conclusion

Testimony	Testify that the Prophet Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. Express your gratitude that he was well prepared to translate the gold plates. Encourage the children to do something extra during the coming week to help prepare themselves to serve the Lord.
Suggested Home Reading	Suggest that the children study Joseph Smith—History 1:53–58 at home as a review of this lesson.
Suggested Family Sharing	Encourage the children to share with their families a specific part of the lesson, such as a story, question, or activity, or to read with their families the “Suggested Home Reading.” Invite a child to give the closing prayer.