

Joseph Smith Begins to Translate the Gold Plates

Purpose

To help the children understand that when we pray, we should seek Heavenly Father's answers and follow his guidance.

Preparation

1. Prayerfully study the historical account given in this lesson; Mormon 9:32; and Doctrine and Covenants 3:1–3, 7–10; 10:1–19, 30–32, 38–46. 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. Additional reading: Words of Mormon 1:3–7 and Doctrine and Covenants 3:4–6, 11–20; 10:20–29, 33–37.
3. Select the discussion questions and enrichment activities that will involve the children and best help them achieve the purpose of the lesson.
4. Materials needed:
 - a. A Doctrine and Covenants for each child.
 - b. A Book of Mormon.
 - c. “Book of Mormon Titles,” found at the end of the lesson.
 - d. Map of the New York–Ohio Area, found at the end of lesson 1.
 - e. Picture 5-13, The Gold Plates.

Suggested Lesson Development

Invite a child to give the opening prayer.

Attention Activity

Display the page “Book of Mormon Titles.” Ask the children if they can read any of the words or characters. Help the children identify each language.

Discuss the many languages used throughout the world, and explain that the word *translate* means to change writing or speech from one language to another.

Show the picture of the gold plates, and discuss Joseph Smith's task of translating the strange writings on the plates. Have a child read Mormon 9:32 aloud.

- What was the language of the writings on the gold plates? (Reformed Egyptian.)

Explain that usually translators need to understand both of the languages they work with. Joseph Smith, however, had had very little schooling and could not speak or read languages other than English. The reformed Egyptian characters on the plates were very strange to him. He had to rely on the Spirit of the Lord, not his own knowledge, to help him translate the characters on the plates into English.

Scriptural and Historical Accounts

Briefly review the problems that Joseph Smith faced after he received the gold plates from Moroni and the help that Joseph received from Martin Harris (see lesson 5).

Teach the children about the loss of the 116 pages of the manuscript translated from the gold plates, as described in the following historical account (refer to the map where appropriate). Discuss the revelations concerning this event that were given to Joseph Smith in Doctrine and Covenants 3 and 10.

Once Joseph and Emma Smith were settled in Harmony, Pennsylvania, Joseph began to translate the gold plates. At first Joseph spent a lot of time becoming familiar with the plates and the language in which they were written. As he studied and prayed, the Urim and Thummim helped him understand the characters on the plates. Joseph learned that the process of translation requires faith, hard work, worthiness, patience, and obedience.

Martin Harris went to Joseph Smith's home in Harmony to help the Prophet in his work of translating the gold plates. Martin became Joseph's scribe. As Joseph read out loud from the plates, Martin Harris wrote down the words Joseph read. After two months of work, Joseph had translated the first part of the plates. The translation was written on 116 pages of paper.

Martin asked Joseph if he could take the 116 translated pages back to Palmyra with him. Martin's wife and friends had criticized him for leaving his farm to help Joseph, and Martin wanted to show them the pages so they would believe he was doing the Lord's work.

Joseph asked the Lord for permission to let Martin take the translated pages, but the Lord said "no." Martin asked Joseph to ask the Lord a second time. Joseph asked the Lord again, and again the answer was "no." Martin pleaded for Joseph to ask the Lord once more. Joseph wanted to satisfy Martin, so he asked the Lord a third time. This time the Lord said Martin could take the translation if he agreed to show it only to his wife and certain other members of his family. Martin promised that he would not show the pages to anyone else. He took the 116 pages of translation to his home in Palmyra.

A few days after Martin left, Emma Smith gave birth to a baby boy who lived only a few hours. Emma was very sick and almost died. For two weeks Joseph stayed by Emma's side and helped care for her. When Emma became stronger, Joseph became concerned about Martin Harris, who had been gone with the translated pages for three weeks. Emma encouraged Joseph to go to Palmyra to find Martin.

Joseph went to his parents' home in Palmyra and sent a message for Martin to meet him. When Martin arrived, he cried out, "Oh, I have lost my soul! I have lost my soul!" Joseph jumped up from where he was sitting and exclaimed, "Martin, have you lost that manuscript? Have you broken your oath, and brought down condemnation upon my head as well as your own?" (quoted in Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 128). Martin admitted that he had broken his promise and had shown the translated pages to other people. The 116 pages had been lost or stolen.

Joseph exclaimed, "All is lost! all is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned—it is I who tempted the wrath of God. I should have been satisfied with the first answer which I received from the Lord; for he told me that it was not safe to let the writing go out of my possession" (quoted in Smith, p. 128).

Joseph and Martin suffered greatly because of the loss of the translation. Joseph returned to Harmony, where he prayed for forgiveness. The angel Moroni took the gold plates and the Urim and Thummim for a while. Later, because of Joseph's

sincere repentance, the Lord forgave Joseph, and Moroni returned the plates and the Urim and Thummim. During this time Joseph received the revelations found in Doctrine and Covenants 3 and 10.

Explain that the Lord told Joseph that Satan had influenced some wicked people to take the pages. These people intended to change the words so people would not believe the Book of Mormon (see D&C 10:10–19). Joseph was told not to retranslate the first portion of the plates (see D&C 10:30–31). Because the Lord knows all things, he knew that this incident would happen. He had therefore commanded the ancient prophet Mormon to write a similar account of what was included in the 116 pages in another part of the gold plates (see Words of Mormon 1:3–7). Joseph translated this part instead of retranslating the lost part (see D&C 10:38–42). Joseph learned that Satan and wicked people could not stop Heavenly Father’s work (see D&C 3:1; 10:43).

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.

- What did Joseph have to do to be able to translate? (He needed to have faith and be prayerful, obedient, and patient.)
- How many times did Joseph Smith ask the Lord to allow Martin Harris to take the translated pages? What did the Lord tell Joseph the first two times? What did the Lord say the third time?
- Why did Martin Harris persist in asking Joseph Smith to seek permission when he had already been told “no”? How did Joseph fear man more than God? (D&C 3:7.) Why are we sometimes afraid of what others might think of us if we obey Heavenly Father’s commandments?
- What do you think Joseph learned from this experience about accepting Heavenly Father’s will? Why is it important to pray for what is right for us rather than just for what we want? Why is it important to accept Heavenly Father’s answers to our prayers?
- How did Joseph feel about losing the 116 pages? What did the Lord tell Joseph to do? (D&C 3:10.) Why is repentance such a wonderful principle?
- What was Joseph told to do to spoil the plan of those who had stolen the 116 pages? (D&C 10:30–31, 38–42.) What does it mean that “the purposes of God cannot be frustrated”? (D&C 3:1.)
- What does the Lord reveal to us in Doctrine and Covenants 10:5 that will help us overcome Satan’s influence?

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. Explain that when we pray, we should listen for Heavenly Father’s answer and follow his guidance. Answers to prayer may come in many ways, such as through counsel from a parent or Church leader, from reading the scriptures, or from listening to a lesson or talk in church.

Our sincere prayers are always answered, although they are not always answered the way we want them to be. Sometimes the answer is “no,”

because what we have asked for would not be best for us. Sometimes the answer is “yes,” and we have a warm, comfortable feeling about what we should do. Sometimes the answer is “wait a while.” Our prayers are always answered at times and in ways that Heavenly Father knows will be best for us.

If appropriate, tell the children about a time when your sincere prayer was answered with “no.” Invite the children to share similar experiences of their own.

2. Display the picture Jesus Praying in Gethsemane (Gospel Art Picture Kit 227; 62175). Explain that Jesus Christ is the perfect example of accepting Heavenly Father’s will. At the end of his earthly life, Jesus knew that the time had come when he must suffer great agony to atone for the sins of the world. Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane. He fell to the ground and prayed.

Ask a child to read aloud from Matthew 26:39 what Jesus said in his prayer: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

Explain that an angel appeared to Jesus to give him spiritual strength (see Luke 22:43). Jesus accepted Heavenly Father’s will; he atoned for us by suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and by giving his life on the cross.

3. Write the following on the chalkboard: “*When the Lord commands, do it.*”

Explain that Joseph Smith learned from his mistakes and challenges. Even though he faced despair when the 116 pages were lost, he learned the importance of obedience, repentance, and accepting the will of Heavenly Father. He learned to listen to the promptings of the Spirit and grew in his ability to use the Urim and Thummim. Later in life he was able to say, “I made this my rule: *When the Lord commands, do it*” (*History of the Church*, 2:170).

Have each child copy the phrase on a piece of paper to take home.

4. Explain that even though Martin Harris lost the 116 pages of translation, he repented and went on to make important contributions to the Church. He was not permitted to assist Joseph further in the translation of the gold plates, but later he sold part of his farm to help pay for the printing of the Book of Mormon. He was one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon and testified of the truthfulness of the book throughout his life. Show the children “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” printed at the front of the Book of Mormon.
5. Let the children display the pictures from the first six lessons of this manual as they retell the events portrayed in the pictures.

Conclusion

Testimony	Express your gratitude for the Prophet Joseph Smith and his efforts to translate the Book of Mormon. Bear your testimony that we will be blessed as we accept Heavenly Father’s will for us and do what he wants us to do.
Suggested Home Reading	Suggest that the children study Doctrine and Covenants 3:1–3 and 10:1–5 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.

Book of Mormon Titles

1. КНИГА МОРМОНА

7. TE BUKA
A MOROMONA

2. HET
BOEK VAN MORMON

8. EL
LIBRO
DE
MORMÓN

3. MORMON
BINAALTSOOS

9. 摩門經

4. モルモン書

10. LE
LIVRE DE MORMON

5. DAS BUCH MORMON

11. พระคัมภีร์มอรมอน

6. 몰몬경

12. THE
BOOK OF MORMON

12. English
11. Thai
10. French

9. Chinese
8. Spanish
7. Tahitian

6. Korean
5. German
4. Japanese

3. Navajo
2. Dutch
1. Russian