

Joseph Smith Translates the Gold Plates

Lesson 7

Purpose To help the children understand and recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost and desire to be worthy of his companionship.

Preparation

1. Prayerfully study Joseph Smith—History 1:66–67; the historical account given in this lesson; and Doctrine and Covenants 5:30, 34; 6:14–23; 8:1–3; 9:3–9; 10:4. 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: *Gospel Principles* (31110), chapter 7.
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 Pearl of Great Price.
 - c. A small radio (or a picture of a radio).
 - d. Picture 5-2, Joseph Smith (Gospel Art Picture Kit 400; 62449); picture 5-14, Joseph Smith Translating the Gold Plates.

Suggested Lesson Development

Invite a child to give the opening prayer.

Attention Activity

Show the radio to the children but do not turn it on (adjust the discussion as necessary if you brought a picture of a radio). Ask the children if they can hear what is being broadcast, and briefly discuss why they cannot. Turn on the radio but do not have it tuned to a station. Point out that the radio is on, but the children still cannot hear what is being broadcast.

- What must we do before we can hear the radio clearly?

Help the children understand that listening to the Holy Ghost may be compared to listening to a radio. Before we can hear what Heavenly Father wants us to know, we must be tuned in to the Holy Ghost. Explain that other names for the Holy Ghost are the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Truth (see D&C 6:15). Ask the children to listen to the lesson to learn how the Holy Ghost helped Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

Scriptural and Historical Accounts

Teach the children about understanding and recognizing the influence of the Holy Ghost, as explained in Doctrine and Covenants 6:14–23, 8:1–3, 9:3–9, Joseph Smith—History 1:66–67, and the following historical account. Show the pictures at appropriate times.

Because of the lost 116 pages of manuscript, the angel Moroni took the gold plates and the Urim and Thummim away from Joseph Smith for a time (see lesson 6). After Joseph repented, these items were returned. As Joseph continued

the translation, he found that he did not have time to take care of his family and farm and still translate as fast as he wanted to. The work of translation was also slowed because Joseph had no scribe to write for him as he translated. Martin Harris was no longer allowed to be Joseph's scribe. Emma sometimes served as scribe, but she had other work to do also. Joseph knew that the translation was not going as fast as it needed to, so he prayed and asked Heavenly Father for help. Read aloud what the Lord answered in Doctrine and Covenants 10:4. A few months later Joseph was told to stop translating until the Lord told him to start again. The Lord promised Joseph that if he did this, the Lord would provide help with the translation (see D&C 5:30, 34).

At this time a young man named Oliver Cowdery was teaching school in Palmyra, New York, and living in the home of Joseph Smith's parents. It was customary at that time for teachers to live in the homes of their students in payment for their teaching. While Oliver was living in the Smith home, he heard about Joseph Smith and the gold plates. He asked about the gold plates, but the Smiths did not want to talk to him about the plates because they had previously been persecuted by people they had told about the plates.

When the Smiths came to know and trust Oliver, Joseph Smith Sr. (the Prophet's father) told Oliver what he knew about the gold plates. For many days Oliver thought about what he had been told. Finally he prayed privately. He felt a peaceful assurance that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God (see D&C 6:22–23) and also felt impressed that he would be a scribe for Joseph Smith.

Oliver wanted to meet Joseph, so he traveled with Samuel Smith, one of Joseph's younger brothers, to Harmony, Pennsylvania, where Joseph and Emma were living. When Oliver arrived, Joseph realized the Lord had sent Oliver to help with the translation of the Book of Mormon. Joseph and Oliver talked until late in the evening, and Oliver agreed to be Joseph's scribe. Oliver wrote of his experiences as scribe: "These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven. . . . Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated with the Urim and Thummim . . . the history or record called 'The Book of Mormon'" (footnote to Joseph Smith—History 1:71).

Joseph learned that he could not translate without the help of the Holy Ghost. One morning he was upset with Emma over something she had done. When he tried to translate, he found that he could not translate at all. Joseph went out into the orchard to pray and ask the Lord why he could not translate. He soon realized that he needed to make peace with Emma before he could have the help of the Holy Ghost. He came back into the house and asked Emma's forgiveness. He was then able to continue with the translation.

With Oliver assisting, the translation of the Book of Mormon went faster. After working as scribe for some time, Oliver wanted to translate. He was given permission to translate but failed when he tried. Oliver thought that the ability to translate would be given to him by merely asking Heavenly Father for it, but he learned that it required great mental and spiritual effort. The ability to translate had to come through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

Discuss with the children the process for making decisions that was revealed to Oliver Cowdery through Joseph Smith in Doctrine and Covenants 9:8–9:

1. Study the problem or question in your mind. Think about how you could solve the problem or answer the question.

2. Decide what you think you should do.
3. Ask Heavenly Father if your decision is right.
4. Listen with your heart and mind. If your decision is right, the Holy Ghost will give you a good feeling about it. If your decision is wrong, you will not feel good about it, and you need to make a different choice.

Explain that this is the process Oliver Cowdery should have used when he tried to translate. It is a process we can all use. If we follow these steps, the Holy Ghost will help us make right decisions.

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.

- Why did Joseph need help with the translation of the gold plates? What did Joseph do about this problem? How were Joseph's prayers answered? What can we do when we have a problem? Invite the children to talk about how Heavenly Father has answered their prayers.
- What did Oliver Cowdery do to gain a testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet? (D&C 6:14.) How can we gain a testimony that Joseph Smith is a prophet? How can we gain a testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon? (See enrichment activity 6.)
- How were Oliver Cowdery's prayers answered when he prayed to know if Joseph Smith was a prophet of God? (D&C 6:15, 23.) In what other ways might Heavenly Father answer our prayers? Remind the children that answers to our prayers often come as peaceful feelings.
- What was Oliver Cowdery told that he must do to be able to translate? (D&C 9:8–9.) How can we use this counsel in our lives?
- What must we do to prepare ourselves to receive help from the Holy Ghost? (See enrichment activity 2.) How do we know when we are feeling the promptings of the Holy Ghost? (D&C 6:23; 8:2–3; and 9:8–9; see enrichment activities 3 and 4.)

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 Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, he said the words out loud, and his scribe wrote the words down. Sometimes Joseph and the scribe were separated by a divider and could not see each other.

Put a divider in the middle of a classroom table or the floor (for example, two children could hold a small blanket or sheet or a large piece of heavy paper). Have a child sit on one side of the divider and slowly read a short verse from the Book of Mormon while a child sitting on the other side of the divider writes down what is being read. Then have the scribe read what he or she wrote so the child reading the scripture can be sure it was written correctly. (You may want to have more than one scribe so all children who want to participate can do so.)

2. Make two columns on the chalkboard. Label one *Invites the Spirit* and the other *Offends the Spirit*. Help the children understand that the Spirit (the Holy Ghost) is very important in our lives. Explain that good things invite the Spirit into our lives while bad things offend the Spirit and cause him to leave (see Moroni 7:12–13). Ask the children to think of actions to list in each column, such as listening to good music and being kind under *Invites the Spirit* and quarreling and being dishonest under *Offends the Spirit*.

Explain that the Holy Ghost will teach us, comfort us, protect us, strengthen us, and guide us (see *Gospel Principles* [31110], chapter 7), but to receive his help we must do things that will invite him to continue to be with us.

3. Have the children look up Doctrine and Covenants 8:2, and have a child read the verse aloud. Discuss how each person can receive personal revelation by listening to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Share an experience when the Holy Ghost directed you, and invite the children to share similar experiences.
4. Explain that when we have the Spirit with us, we feel differently than we feel when we do not have the Spirit or when Satan is influencing us. Read the statements below, and ask the children to stand when the statement describes how we feel when we have the Spirit, and sit when the statement describes how we feel when we do not have the Spirit.

- You feel happy and calm.
- You feel selfish.
- You feel generous.
- You become easily discouraged.
- You want to make others happy.
- You want to get even.
- You are forgiving and kind.
- You feel happy when others do well.

5. List on separate pieces of paper several activities that invite the Spirit and that can be pantomimed by the children. Put the pieces of paper in a container. Have each child select a piece of paper and pantomime the activity listed while the other children try to guess what the activity is.

Possible activities:

- Read the scriptures.
- Pray.
- Perform an act of kindness or service (such as washing dishes or playing with a baby).
- Sit reverently in church.

You may want to have the children choose one of these activities to do during the week. Give the children paper and pencils so they can write down what they have chosen, and tell the children to put their papers where they can be seen often to remind them to do the chosen action.

6. Sing or say the words to “Search, Ponder, and Pray” (*Children’s Songbook*, p. 109). Discuss what the song teaches us to do to obtain a testimony (you may need to explain that *ponder* means to study or think deeply about).
7. Sing or say the words to “The Still Small Voice” (*Children’s Songbook*, p. 106) and discuss how the Holy Ghost speaks to us. Help the children understand that we do not often hear the Holy Ghost speak out loud. Usually the Holy Ghost gives us feelings or puts ideas into our minds about what is right.

Conclusion

Testimony	<p>Share your testimony about the influence the Holy Ghost has had in your life in helping you gain a testimony and giving you comfort and guidance. Help the children understand the great blessing the Holy Ghost can be to them.</p> <p>Encourage the children to ask their parents to share an experience they have had with the Holy Ghost.</p>
Suggested Home Reading	Suggest that the children study Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3 and 9:8–9 at home as a review of this lesson.
Suggested Family Sharing	<p>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.”</p> <p>Invite a child to give the closing prayer.</p>