

Joseph F. Smith

President of the Church, 1901–18

In 1915, when Joseph F. Smith was President of the Church, the First Presidency wrote a letter encouraging families to hold “home evening” activities. They promised blessings to families who would participate: “If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them” (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [1970], 4:338–39).

Just six weeks before his death, while reading and pondering the scriptures, Joseph F. Smith received a beautiful and magnificent vision. This vision showed Jesus Christ visiting the spirits of righteous people who had died. The Savior organized the spirits into a missionary force to preach the gospel to those who had died without a knowledge of the gospel or who had rejected the truth. Among the faithful who were teaching others were his father, Hyrum Smith, and the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Church accepted this revelation as scripture, and it was published in 1976 as section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

- 1838 Born on November 13 in Far West, Missouri, to Hyrum Smith (the Prophet Joseph’s brother) and Mary Fielding Smith
- 1844 Age 5, his father martyred at Carthage Jail, Carthage, Illinois
- 1848 Age 9, drives an ox team across the plains

- 1852 Age 13, baptized a member of the Church on May 21 in City Creek, Salt Lake City
- 1852 Age 13, becomes an orphan when his mother, Mary Fielding Smith, dies on September 21
- 1854–58 Ages 15–19, serves a mission to Hawaii
- 1860–63 Ages 21–24, serves a mission to Great Britain
- 1864 Age 25–26, serves a special mission to Hawaii
- 1866 Age 27, marries Julina Lambson on May 5; she dies in 1936
- 1866 Age 27, ordained an Apostle by Brigham Young on July 1 and called as a counselor in the First Presidency; later called as a counselor to Presidents Taylor (1880), Woodruff (1889), and Snow (1898)
- 1873–75 Ages 35–37, serves as president of the European Mission
- 1877 Age 38, serves again as president of the European Mission
- 1901 Age 62, sustained as President of the Church on October 17, with John R. Winder and Anthon H. Lund as counselors
- 1915 Age 76, dedicates the temple site at Laie, Hawaii, where he had served on a mission as a youth
- 1918 Age 80, dies on November 19 in Salt Lake City after 17 years as President of the Church

Summary

Joseph F. Smith, sixth President of the Church, was five years old when his father, Hyrum Smith, was killed at Carthage Jail with the Prophet Joseph Smith. Joseph F. Smith was nine years old when he drove an ox team across the plains. As President of the Church, he encouraged families to hold “home

evening” activities, promising that “great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them.”

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS