



Introduction to Family History

Teacher Manual

Religion 261

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Introduction

This manual is designed to assist you with lesson preparation by providing introductory information to the chapters, identifying scriptures and gospel principles, and suggesting ways you can help students understand the doctrines and apply them in their lives.

If you are not well trained in family history but have the responsibility to teach this course, you need to become familiar with the Church's family history website: FamilySearch.org. You will benefit from reading the introductions and working through the tutorial exercises available on FamilySearch.org. You also need to become familiar with other resources that are available as you teach this course, such as the Brigham Young University Religion 261 website: familyhistorylab.byu.edu.

You should be familiar with the techniques you will encourage your students to use. Take time to learn the current methods for recording and submitting family history information.

Purpose of the Teacher Manual

This teacher manual is intended to serve as a resource for both newly called teachers with little teaching experience and teachers with years of experience. Select those teaching ideas that best meet the needs of your students. Feel free to adapt them to your teaching style, but also be willing to try the teaching approaches found in the manual. You will undoubtedly have your own ideas that can be easily adapted into the prescribed lesson material. The 12 lessons in this course fall into two main categories: (1) The doctrinal framework

underlying *why* we do work pertaining to redeeming the dead, and (2) The activities and methods related to doing family history research and temple work—*what* to do and *how* to do it. As the course progresses, it presents doctrinal lessons interspersed with lessons on how to do family history work.

How This Manual Is Organized

Religion 261 is designed to be taught in a single semester. This manual contains 12 chapters, each with a corresponding chapter in the Religion 261 student manual. If your class meets twice a week, each lesson should last approximately 50 minutes. If you teach once a week, adapt the course material to your individual teaching circumstances. Because most institute classes meet for more than 12 class periods, more than one class period could be used to study a lesson—in particular, some of the “how to” lessons will work better if they take more than one class period to teach. It is also intended that much of the class time may be devoted to actually doing family history research.

There are three sections to each lesson in this manual:

- Introduction
- Some Important Doctrines and Principles Developed in This Lesson
- Suggestions for Teaching

Introduction

The introduction highlights general themes contained in the lesson and will help you gain an initial vision of the overall lesson.

Some Important Doctrines and Principles Developed in This Lesson

This section contains a list of central doctrines, principles, and other ideas developed in each lesson. In addition to the doctrines and principles identified in the manual, you might know other important truths and be prompted to teach them. This is your prerogative as the teacher and may be necessary for you to meet the needs of your students and to follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Before teaching additional principles, however, you should survey the other lessons in the manual. If a principle or doctrine is not addressed in a particular lesson, it may be presented in another lesson that supports the topic more completely.

Suggestions for Teaching

This section develops each of the identified doctrines and principles with specific teaching suggestions. As the teacher you should adapt the lesson suggestions to fit classroom organization, meet student needs, observe time constraints, and follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Decide What to Teach

The Holy Ghost will be more likely to guide you in determining what to teach if you first take time to become familiar with the content of the prescribed lesson material and identify and understand key doctrines and principles. Inasmuch as there are several doctrines and principles developed in each lesson, decide what level of emphasis to give each segment of the lesson. As you seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost, He will help you determine the needs of your students and how

to use the materials in this manual to meet those needs. Students will probably be eager to learn how to research and what to do to locate necessary information as quickly as possible. If students understand the doctrine of redeeming the dead, they are likely to want to research information pertaining to their kindred dead. Because of the importance of both of these issues, the doctrinal and practical (how-to) lessons in this manual have been interspersed. This will help students deepen their doctrinal understanding as they proceed in learning how to do research.

As you teach this class, think like a beginner. Many of your students will have little or no knowledge about how to proceed with family history work. Most students will likely be anxious to find a name in their ancestry to take to the temple. Help them get to the computer for family history name preparation as quickly as possible. As the teacher of this course, one of your goals should be to help each student prepare a family name for the temple and, where possible, do the work in the temple for that individual.

Decide How to Teach

Remember the role of the student as you select different teaching methods for a lesson. Speaking to religious educators, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated:

“Make your objective to help students understand, retain, and use divine truth. Keep that objective foremost in every aspect of your preparation and teaching. . . .
“ . . . Assure that there is abundant participation because that use of agency by a student authorizes the Holy Ghost to instruct. It also helps the student retain your message. As students verbalize truths, they

are confirmed in their souls and strengthen their personal testimonies” (“To Understand and Live Truth” [an evening with Elder Richard G. Scott, Feb. 4, 2005], 2–3). A worthwhile goal for the course would be for you to expect students to be spiritually mature and to take their role as learners seriously.

When preparing to teach, consider the difference between a teacher-centered approach and a student-centered approach. There is a big difference between a teacher who asks, “What will *I do* in my class today?” and one who asks, “What will *my students do* in class today?” Or, “What will *I teach* today?” and “How will I help *my students discover* what they need to know?” The second approach produces deeper, longer lasting, and more meaningful learning than the first. Consider the following suggestions:

- Encourage students to read assigned sections of the student manual before each lesson.
- Ensure that teaching methods are in harmony with the message being taught and are conducive to the influence of the Spirit.
- Establish relevancy and purpose. When students see the relevance of what they are studying to their own situations and circumstances, they are generally more motivated to learn and apply gospel teachings.
- Give students the opportunity to ask and answer questions. The use of good questions is a valuable tool in helping students take responsibility for their learning. You may wish to invite them occasionally to come to class with a question written down. Help students see that the questions they ask in class

may prove to be more important in the learning process than questions asked by the teacher.

- Create an environment where students feel the Spirit of the Lord and have the privilege and responsibility to teach and to learn from one another (see D&C 88:78, 122). Avoid using lecture as the main teaching method. Instead, use a variety of methods and approaches. Allow students to discover truths by guiding them to truths you and others have found. Provide opportunities for students to explain, share, and testify of what they are learning and experiencing.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that effective teachers help students find answers for themselves: “I have observed a common characteristic among the instructors who have had the greatest influence in my life. They have helped me to seek learning by faith. They refused to give me easy answers to hard questions. In fact, they did not give me any answers at all. Rather, they pointed the way and helped me take the steps to find my own answers. I certainly did not always appreciate this approach, but experience has enabled me to understand that an answer given by another person usually is not remembered for very long, if remembered at all. But an answer we discover or obtain through the exercise of faith, typically, is retained for a lifetime” (“Seek Learning by Faith” [an evening with Elder David A. Bednar, Feb. 3, 2006], 5).

Use inspiring stories and quotations about family history, and invite class members to share success stories from their own experience.



Student Manual Commentary

The *Introduction to Family History Student Manual* contains valuable commentary by General Authorities and officers of the Church. Numerous teaching ideas in this manual refer you to the commentary found in the student manual. Encourage students to use this resource both in class and out. Each chapter of the student manual concludes with a “Questions to Ponder” and “Suggested

Assignments” section. Many of these questions and activities can be adapted into teaching ideas for use in class.

Computers and Family History Research

You will need to assess the computer needs and capabilities of your students and the availability of computer facilities in your area. Some institutes have access to stake family history libraries and have received permission from

appropriate priesthood leaders to use those facilities for institute family history classes. Depending on where you live, many of your students may own their own computers and will be able to bring them to class. Consult with your institute director, local priesthood leaders, and students to determine whether your students will practice doing family history work on their home computers, personal laptops, stake computers, or a combination of these.



This teacher manual does not address the specifics of computer programs and procedures for doing family history work. Technologies change too rapidly for a printed manual to stay current. By the time an institute manual is printed, some procedures may have already been upgraded or eliminated. The Church Family History Department is continually improving and simplifying the computer process for research and name submission for temple ordinances. This manual does recommend some websites, but these too may become outdated or otherwise change over time. FamilySearch.org should be the primary computer

source for students to use in gaining practical experience.

You should incorporate computer activity into this course as best fits the computer situation and needs of the students in your location. Plan to get students working on computers as early as possible in the course.

Adapting the Manual to Those with Disabilities

When teaching students with disabilities, adapt the lessons to meet their needs. For example, many lessons require students to read either aloud or silently and to

write responses on paper. To adapt to nonreading students, you might consider reading aloud yourself, having fellow students read, or using prerecorded materials to narrate the scriptures (such as an mp3, CD, or audiocassette). When lessons call for written responses, you might encourage oral responses instead.

The Family Is Central to the Plan of Salvation

1

Introduction

We know that individuals and families are of eternal worth in Heavenly Father's sight because His plan provides for their salvation. The worth of each soul is so great that He sent His Beloved Son to atone for us so that we could repent and return to Him (see D&C 18:10–11).

Sister Julie B. Beck, while serving as general president of the Relief Society, focused our attention on the central role of the family when she taught, "The plan of happiness, also called the plan of salvation, was a plan created

for families" ("Teaching the Doctrine of the Family," *Ensign*, Mar. 2011, 12). As you teach students the doctrines and principles in this chapter, help them understand their identity as children of a loving Heavenly Father, that they are here on earth to continue becoming like Him, and that the family is central to their progress within the plan of salvation. This knowledge will lay the foundation for why we are commanded to seek after our kindred dead and to vicariously participate in saving ordinances on their behalf.

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- "The worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10).
- In the premortal life we lived as spirit children of heavenly parents.
- Families are central to Heavenly Father's plan for our mortal life.
- In our Heavenly Father's plan, families are meant to be eternal.



Suggestions for Teaching

"The Worth of Souls Is Great in the Sight of God"

Show pictures of a baby and an elderly person. Ask students to identify elements of worth common to both, and then elements distinct to each individual. For example: They both have spirits from Heavenly Father—the older person has experience and knowledge that the baby lacks; the baby is innocent and guiltless and has a lifetime of potential ahead.

- What is the ultimate goal that Heavenly Father has for both the baby and the elderly person? (To return to God and become like Him.)

Write "Doctrine and Covenants 18:10" on the board, and ask a student to read the verse to the class.

- Why do you think the word *remember* is important in this scripture?
- What evidence have you seen that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God"?

Have students read Doctrine and Covenants 18:11–13 and list what the Savior did that shows how much He values each individual. (He suffered death and the pain

of suffering for the sins of all people. He was resurrected so that we might repent and come to Him. He has great joy when we repent.)

Ask students to suggest other scriptures that also emphasize the worth of souls in God's eyes. If students are unable to come up with other scriptures, consider reading John 3:16; Moses 1:39; and Alma 26:37 together with the class. Ask what each scripture teaches about the worth of souls.

- How can knowing these truths affect your understanding of your individual worth?

Invite students to share their testimonies regarding their infinite worth in the sight of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and to share experiences that either led to or strengthened that testimony.

In the Premortal Life We Lived as Spirit Children of Heavenly Parents

Invite students to read Acts 17:29; Hebrews 12:9; and Doctrine and Covenants 138:56 and look for what these scriptures teach about our premortal existence. Then ask:

- What do these verses teach about our premortal existence?

Explain that latter-day prophets have taught us more about our premortal experience. Ask students to read in the institute student manual under the headings "We are spirit children of heavenly parents" (1.3.1) and "The family is eternal" (1.3.2).

- Why is it important for you to know that in the premortal world you belonged to the family of Heavenly Father and that you are His child?

Families Are Central to Heavenly Father's Plan for Our Mortal Life

Write the following statement on the board:

The family is the most important organization on earth.

- Why do you think this statement is true? (Encourage several responses from students, and list their responses on the board.)

Have students read in the student manual under the headings "The plan of salvation was created for families" (1.5.1), "Important lessons are learned through family relationships" (1.5.2), and "The greatest happiness comes through families" (1.5.3). As students read, have them consider why the family is the most important organization on the earth.

- What would you say to someone who has a difficult time understanding the importance of the family?
- How would life be different if we had all been sent to earth as individuals without family relationships—no father, mother, siblings, ancestors, or posterity?
- What experiences have you had that helped you better understand the family's importance?

Ask students to refer to "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (see student manual, end of chapter 1).

Assign students as individuals, pairs, or in small groups to look for sentences or phrases in paragraphs 4, 5, 6, and 7 that indicate the central nature of the family in mortality. After a few minutes invite students to share with the class what they found and what it means to them. Consider concluding this portion of the lesson by giving students individual pieces of paper and asking them to respond in writing to the question, “What are a few things you could do to make your family more of a central focus in your life?”

In Our Heavenly Father’s Plan, Families Are Meant to Be Eternal

Invite students to think of a time when a family member or a friend died. Explain that though funerals are sad occasions, they can often be comforting and uplifting because of the truths that are taught there, especially about the eternal nature of family relationships. Ask the class:

- Have any of you ever experienced the death of a loved one? Tell us a little about it. (If students have not had such an experience, you might share one of your own.)

Ask a student to read aloud the statement by Elder Russell M. Nelson in the student manual under the heading “No sacrifice is too great to have an eternal family” (1.7.2).

- Why do you think no sacrifice is too great to have the blessings of an eternal family?

Assign half of the class to study Doctrine and Covenants 132:15–18, looking for what the Lord says awaits those who do not meet His requirements for marriage. Have the other half of the class study Doctrine and Covenants 132:7, 19, looking for what the Lord requires for a marriage to continue after death.

- What are some phrases in these verses that describe the condition in the next life of those who do not meet the Lord’s requirements of marriage? (“Not of force when they are dead,” “ministering servants,” “cannot be enlarged,” “separately and singly, without exaltation,” “not valid.”)
- What requirements must be met in order for a marriage to last beyond death? (Be married in the temple and continue faithful to the end.)

Note: If “sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise” seems to be misunderstood by students, consider sharing the following quotation: “The Holy Ghost is the Holy Spirit of Promise (Acts 2:33). He confirms as acceptable to God the righteous acts, ordinances, and covenants of men. The Holy Spirit of Promise witnesses to the Father that the saving ordinances have been performed properly and that the covenants associated with them have been kept” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Holy Spirit of Promise,” scriptures.lds.org).

- How can this doctrine affect you and the choices you are making in life?

Share your testimony of the central nature of the family in Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness. Express to your class the feelings you have for your own family and their importance to you. Invite students to consider two or three things they can do at this point in their lives so they may claim the blessings of an eternal family and bring those blessings to others through family history and temple work.

2

The Mission of Elijah

Introduction

Three years after the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) saw and talked with the Eternal Father and Jesus Christ in the Sacred Grove, the angel Moroni appeared to him. As part of Moroni's instruction, he told Joseph Smith of the future coming of Elijah. Referring to this sequence of events, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "The introductory events of the Restoration revealed a correct understanding of the Godhead, emphasized the importance of the Book of Mormon, and anticipated the work of salvation and exaltation for both the living and the dead. This inspiring sequence is instructive about the spiritual matters of highest priority to Deity" ("The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 24).

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: "Elijah came not only to stimulate research for ancestors. He also enabled families to be eternally linked beyond the bounds of mortality. Indeed, the opportunity for families to be sealed forever is the real reason for our research" ("A New Harvest Time," *Ensign*,

May 1998, 34). In this lesson you will help students better understand and appreciate the importance of the mission of Elijah, who restored the sealing keys to the Prophet Joseph Smith, enabling families to be sealed together forever and thus fulfill one of the matters of the Restoration "of highest priority to Deity."

Help students understand that the 15 prophets, seers, and revelators of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—which includes the Twelve Apostles, the counselors in the First Presidency, and the President of the Church, who presides—all hold the sealing keys that were bestowed upon the Prophet Joseph Smith by Elijah. Other General Authorities and temple sealers throughout the world receive delegated authority to seal couples and families, both living and dead, together in holy temples. Help students know that the Lord will bless and guide them as they turn their hearts toward family members and seek to provide the saving ordinances of the gospel for those in the spirit world.

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- The sealing keys of the priesthood enable ordinances to be binding beyond the grave.
- Elijah was the last Old Testament prophet to hold the keys of the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
- In fulfillment of prophecy, Elijah restored the keys of the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood to the earth in this dispensation.
- The Spirit of Elijah, by definition, is the Holy Ghost as His directing influence guides those who participate in family history and temple work.
- After Elijah's return, interest in family history began to accelerate around the world.

Suggestions for Teaching

The Sealing Keys of the Priesthood Enable Ordinances to Be Binding beyond the Grave

Hold up a set of keys for the students to see, and ask:

- What are keys used for?
- What kind of keys have you used or owned?

Point out to students that in general terms, keys allow doors and other objects to be opened or sometimes turned on. With this thought in mind, have a student read aloud from the student manual under the heading “Priesthood Keys of Authority” (2.1).

- In very simple terms, how would you define what is meant by the term “priesthood keys of authority”?
- Who directs the exercise of the sealing keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood today?

Have students study the student manual under the subheadings “The sealing powers represent the consummate gift from God” (2.2.2) and “Ordinances are given validity beyond the grave” (2.2.3).

- How would you explain, in a single sentence, the importance of the sealing keys of the priesthood?
- Why is it important for you to know that sealing keys are on the earth today?

Assign half of the class to read Doctrine and Covenants 128:17–19, looking for insights about sealing keys; ask the other half of the class to read Doctrine and Covenants 138:38, 46–48, looking for the importance of family generations being sealed together. Invite students to share the insights about sealing keys that they gain from these scriptures.

Elijah Was the Last Old Testament Prophet to Hold the Keys of the Sealing Power of the Melchizedek Priesthood

Ask students to share what they already know about the prophet Elijah. After several students have responded, share the following statement from the Bible Dictionary: “We learn from latter-day revelation that Elijah held the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood and was the last prophet to do so before the time of Jesus Christ” (Bible Dictionary, “Elijah”).

Explain that an example of Elijah’s use of the sealing power is found in the Bible. King Ahab (king of Israel) and the majority of the people of Israel were wicked. Ask students to study 1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41–45 to see an illustration of how Elijah used the sealing power. Encourage students to share with the class what they learned from these verses about the sealing power.

Invite students to turn to 2 Kings 2. Explain that Elijah was nearing the end of his ministry. As Elijah and Elisha journeyed on foot toward Jordan, Elisha witnessed Elijah as he was being translated. Have a student read 2 Kings 2:11–14.

- Why was it important that Elijah be taken to heaven without experiencing death? (If needed, refer students to the student manual under the heading “Elijah was translated” [2.3.2].)



In Fulfillment of Prophecy, Elijah Restored the Keys of the Sealing Power of the Melchizedek Priesthood to the Earth in This Dispensation

Ask if any of your students can quote the last two verses of the Old Testament (help them by saying, “Behold, I will send you Elijah . . .”), or ask a student to read Malachi 4:5–6. It might be helpful for students if the terms below are written on the board. Explore the meaning of these terms with your class.

Note: Possible interpretations are provided in parentheses. You may also find the following student manual commentaries helpful: “Elijah’s return turned the hearts of the children to their fathers” (2.4.1), “Promises made to the fathers are planted in the hearts of the children” (2.4.2), and “The earth would be wasted if Elijah did not return” (2.4.3).

The great and dreadful day of the Lord (Second Coming of Jesus Christ)

Hearts (desires)

The fathers (can mean either Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or our ancestors)

The children (people who live on earth in this generation)

Share the following quotation by the Prophet Joseph Smith with your class:



“The Bible says, ‘I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.’ [Malachi 4:5–6.]

“Now, the word *turn* here should be translated *bind*, or *seal*”

(*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 472).

- How do the words *bind* and *seal* help you understand Malachi’s prophecy?

Explain to students that when Moroni visited Joseph Smith in September 1823, he quoted from Malachi 4:5–6 with some slight changes in the wording. These changes help to clarify and add greater meaning and understanding to Malachi’s prophecy. Assign the class to compare Malachi 4:5–6 with Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39. Then discuss:

- What are some differences you notice?

For example, Malachi 4:5 states, “I will send you Elijah,” whereas Joseph Smith—History 1:38 states, “I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah.” Malachi 4:6 states, “Turn the heart of the fathers to the children,” whereas Joseph Smith—History 1:39 states, “He shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers.”

- What insights can we gain from these differences? (Possible answers include: The priesthood would be *revealed* by Elijah. Since Joseph Smith already held the Melchizedek Priesthood, the purposes of the priesthood would be further

revealed and understood as a result of Elijah’s visit—the sealing power would be added, family history work could be done with saving ordinances performed in temples, etc. The Joseph Smith—History account adds that the children would have planted in their hearts the promises made to the fathers—the *fathers* could be Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. [covered more in chapter 10 on the Abrahamic covenant]. The *promises* could refer to the gospel blessings, including eternal life. The Joseph Smith—History account also suggests that because of the gospel promises made to the ancient Saints, our hearts would desire those same blessings for us and for our deceased ancestors.)

- How has the prophecy in Malachi 4:5–6 and Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39 been fulfilled?

Have a student read the section summary for Doctrine and Covenants 110 and read verses 13–16 from section 110.

- What phrase from Doctrine and Covenants 110:13 confirms the biblical account of Elijah’s translation? (“Taken to heaven without tasting death.” Be sure students understand that when Elijah came to the Kirtland Temple, he had a physical body. The statements in the student manual under the headings “Elijah was translated” [2.3.2] and “Elijah returned in fulfillment of prophecy” [2.5.1] may be helpful to explain this answer.)

Have students read Doctrine and Covenants 27:9 to emphasize that the prophet Elijah was chosen by God to be the one responsible for the sealing keys. Explain that when the Melchizedek Priesthood is conferred upon an individual, that ordination gives him *authority* but does not include all the *keys* of the priesthood. For example, a prospective missionary may be ordained an elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood, but he does not have the keys to perform baptisms; he must first be authorized by another Melchizedek Priesthood holder who does hold the keys, such as a bishop or mission president. A worthy father may baptize and confirm one of his children only after being authorized to do so by his bishop or branch president. All priesthood ordinances are performed only under the direction and approval of a man having priesthood keys to authorize such ordinances (for further explanation, see the student manual under the heading “Priesthood Keys of Authority” [2.1]).

In the unfolding Restoration, the Prophet Joseph Smith received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James, and John in 1829, but he still needed the keys given to him by Elijah. Before Elijah came, Joseph Smith could not perform a temple marriage sealing or seal children to parents in the temple, nor could he delegate to others the power and authority to do so. (*Note:* At this point, you may want to refer to the statement by Elder David A. Bednar in the introduction to this lesson.)

Have students read from the headings “The sealing power continues with the President of the Church” (2.5.3) and “The restoration of sealing keys is a pinnacle of the Restoration” (2.5.4) in the student manual.

- Why is it important to you to know that the keys restored by the prophet Elijah to the Prophet Joseph Smith are still on the earth today?
- In what ways have the keys restored by Elijah in these latter days blessed your life?



Gospel Art Book (2009), no. 95

The Spirit of Elijah, by Definition, Is the Holy Ghost as His Directing Influence Guides Those Who Participate in Family History and Temple Work

Invite students to scan 2 Kings 2:9, 15.

Note to teacher: The article by Bruce L. Anderson, "The Mantle of Elijah," *Ensign*, Aug. 2002 may be helpful in preparing to teach this portion of the lesson.

- What do you think it means that the Spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha?
- What do you think it means that the Spirit of Elijah can rest on people who do family history research? (For help with this answer, see the student manual under the heading "The Spirit of Elijah' is a manifestation of the Holy Ghost" [2.6.1].)

Have students turn to Doctrine and Covenants 138. Prepare them to study from this section of the Doctrine and Covenants by sharing the following information: At the time President Joseph F. Smith received section 138, he had recently experienced the death of his son, 45-year-old Hyrum Mack Smith, who was an Apostle. Thirteen of his 48 children preceded him in death. In addition, a pandemic flu epidemic was in process that eventually killed between 50 and 100 million people worldwide and sickened about 500 million. World War I was in process, which ultimately took 16 million lives. President Smith was himself in poor health and died about one month after receiving this revelation.

Write the following scripture references on the board, and have students silently read the verses from President Joseph F. Smith's vision:

Doctrine and Covenants 138

1-4

11

28-35

58-60

As students read, encourage them to place themselves in President Smith's situation. Invite them to look for doctrinal truths that President Joseph F. Smith received in this singular vision. Tell students that they will be asked to share their feelings and insights at the end of their reading.

After allowing time to read, invite students to share any insights and feelings they have about these passages of scripture, particularly regarding their kindred dead who died without a knowledge of the gospel. Testify to students that wonderful experiences await them as they continue to seek out their ancestors, and that the Lord will help them in their endeavors.

After Elijah's Return, Interest in Family History Began to Accelerate around the World

Ask students if any of them or someone they know is enthusiastically involved with family history research and temple work. If so, invite them to share what they or the people they know are doing with family history work and how they feel about it.

Have a student read the first two paragraphs of President Gordon B. Hinckley's (1910–2008) statement in the student manual under the heading "Millions are working on family history" (2.7.1). Ask if anyone is aware of interest in family ancestry that is not sponsored by the Church (such as a television program, websites, a genealogical library or society, or articles in magazines or newspapers). If so, invite them to share that information with the class.

- Why do you think interest in the family structure and ancestry are so popular around the world?
- How could that interest help in the work of the Lord?

Invite students to turn to the Questions to Ponder section at the end of chapter 2 of the student manual (pages 22–23) and silently review the questions. Invite students to share any answers to those questions that they would like to share. Bear your testimony regarding the mission of Elijah, the reality of the sealing power held by living prophets and temple workers today, and the joy that accompanies our efforts to have our families sealed together for eternity.

3

Getting Started with Family History Research

Introduction

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said of those who have passed away: “I do not like to speak of them as ‘the dead.’ I believe that under the great plan of our Eternal Father and through the atonement of Christ, they are living. Though they have died as to their mortal bodies, they have retained their identity as individuals. They are personalities as much so as are we, and as entitled to the blessings that pertain to eternal life” (“Rejoice in This Great Era of Temple Building,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 59). Understanding the continued existence of those who have passed from this mortal life into the spirit world can increase our desire to learn of our ancestors and provide the saving ordinances of the gospel for them.

In this lesson you will help students strengthen the bond between themselves and their ancestors. They can further this process by collecting records from home, registering for access to the Church’s family history website (available from the home page of LDS.org), and searching their ancestral history in the Church’s computer databases.

Students will understand that by providing vicarious ordinances for their ancestors, they become instrumental in extending to them the full blessings of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice. Students will also understand that they should use wisdom in devoting their time to family history in order to give proper attention to other important priorities in their lives.



Gospel Art Book (2009), no. 57

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- We become “saviors on Mount Zion” when we provide saving ordinances for our deceased ancestors.
- We can begin family history work by gathering our own personal information and focusing on our first few generations.
- The Church’s FamilySearch website is an important resource for family history records and information.
- We should use wisdom in determining how much time and effort to invest in family history research.

Suggestions for Teaching

We Become “Saviors on Mount Zion” When We Provide Saving Ordinances for Our Deceased Ancestors

To begin class, invite students to sing verses 2–4 of “While of These Emblems We Partake” (*Hymns*, no. 174). Prepare students to sing by inviting them to ponder the words while they sing, particularly what the Savior did for us that we cannot do for ourselves. Drawing from the text of “While of These Emblems We Partake,” ask students:

- What did the Savior do for us that we could not do for ourselves? (List student answers on the board.)

Give each student a piece of paper, and invite everyone to take a few minutes and record their feelings toward the Savior and the sacrifice He made for them. After a few minutes, explain to students that later in the lesson you will have them refer to what they wrote.

Read the following statement to your class:

“The only way for us to be saved is for someone else to rescue us. We need someone who can satisfy the demands of justice—standing in our place to assume the burden of the Fall and to pay the price for our sins. Jesus Christ has always been the only one capable of making such a sacrifice” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 16).

Invite students to read Articles of Faith 1:4 and Doctrine and Covenants 138:32–33. Then ask:

- What is the difference between how baptism is mentioned in the fourth article of faith and how it is mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants 138? (The word *vicarious* is associated with the word *baptism* in D&C 138:33.)
- Why is this difference necessary in section 138? (Baptism for those in the spirit world must be done vicariously by someone alive on earth.)

Explain that in the Church the word *vicarious* means to do something for someone else that they could not do for themselves. The Savior’s Atonement was a “vicarious” sacrifice for us. The work we do in the temple for those in the spirit world is also a vicarious work—they cannot do it for themselves.

Ask students how many of them have participated in baptisms for the dead. Invite two or three students to share their feelings about the experience. (If none have had that opportunity, you may want to share your own feelings about your experience participating in baptisms for the dead.)

Invite a student to read Obadiah 1:21. Ask the class to explain how their experiences participating in vicarious baptisms for the dead might relate to this verse. Read with students under the headings “Temple work is like the spirit of the Savior’s sacrifice” (3.1.2) and “This work rests upon the Latter-day Saints” (3.1.4) in the student manual. Invite students to share what impressed them in these statements.

Have students silently read what they wrote earlier in the lesson about their feelings for the Savior. Have them take a moment to ponder how the people in the spirit world may have similar feelings of gratitude toward those who vicariously participate in saving ordinances on their behalf in the temple.

We Can Begin Family History Work by Gathering Our Own Personal Information and Focusing on Our First Few Generations

Read the statement from President Hinckley under the introduction of this chapter. Ask students if they have grandparents (or great-grandparents) who have passed away, but whom they can remember. Invite one or two students to share a brief memory of one of their grandparents. Explain that when we begin collecting genealogical records, we should think of these records as representing individuals with distinctive personalities and lives, each needing the Savior as much as we do.

Note to teacher: As technology continues to advance, students will be increasingly knowledgeable about computers. With this in mind, you may want to encourage students to do all they can to scan and store records and information digitally rather than on paper.

A starting point in family history research is to look for records that are easily accessible to us in our own homes. Ask students to imagine they are detectives who were hired to look for evidence that someone might be living in a particular house.

- What types of evidence or records would you look for to determine if a specific person was living there? (List answers on the board. Answers could include photos, school records, birth certificates, marriage or death certificates, scrapbooks, diaries, church records or certificates, letters, obituaries, wills, deeds, military records, newspaper clippings, passports, or citizenship documents.)
- Which of these items or documents would be helpful in family history work?

Ask a student to read the statement by President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles about one way we can begin collecting genealogical records (in the student manual under the heading “Start with gathering and storing your research” [3.2.2]). After reading President Packer’s statement, you might ask students if any of them have a box of this type where they have kept personal documents and other information.

- What does President Packer recommend concerning the placement of the box?
- Why do you think President Packer’s suggested approach can help you experience success in gathering records?
- What is President Packer’s counsel regarding time for this project?

Show students a copy of the pedigree chart found at the end of this lesson. Explain that a pedigree chart is a common form used to show parental lineages. Explain to students that in the next lesson they will be given the opportunity to fill out a pedigree chart on their family. Encourage them to come prepared with as much information as they can to fill in the names of themselves, their parents, their grandparents, and their great-grandparents. The first four generations in their ancestries is the recommended starting effort for family history research. Point out to students that electronic forms can be downloaded from FamilySearch.org. Many students may want to bring their computer with them to class and work on this form digitally.

The image shows a pedigree chart form with columns for names, birth dates, and death dates. The chart is a tree structure showing a family lineage across several generations. The names are written in the columns, and the birth and death dates are also recorded. The chart is a standard pedigree chart used in genealogy to show the relationships between family members across generations.

The Church’s FamilySearch Website Is an Important Resource for Family History Records and Information

Introduce students to the Church’s FamilySearch website (accessed from the home page of LDS.org). This site will help them expand research they have begun from gathering information and records at home. If possible (if your class is taught in a stake family history center, or if you have the technology available to access the Internet from the classroom), show them how to enter FamilySearch.org. Demonstrate how to navigate around the site, showing what kind of information is available. (An alternate approach would be to obtain permission from a student before class to trace his or her lineage during class. This student would need to have enough information on his or her lineage to be able to perform the necessary searches.) Also show the class how to register for an LDS account in order to use the family tree feature on the FamilySearch site.

If access to computer technology is not available, explain the Church's family history websites and what is available (or you may invite a branch, ward, or stake family history consultant to do so).

Also be sure to explain how to register for the Church member family history website. To register, students will need their confirmation date and their Church membership number, which are available from their ward or branch clerk (membership number is also on a current temple recommend). In addition to research information, this FamilySearch website provides an option for users to submit names of their ancestors for temple ordinances, as well as opportunities to add information to the database and correct inaccurate information concerning their own family history. Those who use this website will also be able to see the contact information for others who are working on the same family history lines, so they can collaborate with each other in their research.

Encourage students to get an LDS account if they do not already have one so that they can get on the Church member family history website before the next class and begin searching for information about the first four generations of their pedigree chart. (Students with more family history experience who already have complete information on their first four generations can expand their research to fit their own situations and goals.)

We Should Use Wisdom in Determining How Much Time and Effort to Invest in Family History Research

Invite a student to read Mosiah 4:27.

- How might this counsel be applied to your family history efforts?
- What help is available to us in making decisions regarding how much time to spend on family history work? (Possible answers include prayer, counsel from priesthood leaders, parents, and patriarchal blessings.)

Ask a student to read the first three paragraphs of the counsel by Elder Dallin H. Oaks in the student manual under the heading "There are many tasks in the work of redeeming the dead" (3.4.1). To help students apply these principles in their own family history efforts, ask questions like the following:

- What principles did Elder Oaks teach that can help us work on our family history with "wisdom and order"?
- What meaning does Elder Oaks's counsel have for you as an individual?

Consider having students silently study the statement by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the student manual under the heading "You have an invitation and a promise from an Apostle" (3.4.3). As they read, encourage students to read slowly and to identify and ponder the promises Elder Bednar makes to the youth of the Church. Ask the class:

- Of all the promises Elder Bednar makes to young people, which one carries the most meaning to you? Why?

If you have students who have already had some experience in family history research, ask:

- How have you already, in some degree, felt one or more of those promises fulfilled in your life?

Encourage students to take some time over the next few days to prayerfully consider current circumstances in their lives and set realistic goals concerning how much time they can spend each week to do this work. You might also suggest that they consider a specific day and time they might set aside each week for this work. Oftentimes having a specific day and time devoted to accomplishing a task leads to greater success. Reassure students that the Lord understands our mortal conditions and our desires to do His work. Because this is the Lord's work, He will help us succeed, even if success is slow and incremental. Our kindred dead whom we seek out and do the work for are grateful for any and all of our efforts in their behalf.

Pedigree Chart

See the instructions on page 2.

This is pedigree chart no. _____.

Name no. 1 on this chart is the same as
name no. _____ on chart no. _____.

2

Father B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Marriage date _____

Marriage place _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

1

Name B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Marriage date _____

Marriage place _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

3

Mother B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

4

Father of no. 2 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Marriage date _____

Marriage place _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

5

Mother of no. 2 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

6

Father of no. 3 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Marriage date _____

Marriage place _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

7

Mother of no. 3 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

8

Father of no. 4 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Marriage date _____

Marriage place _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

9

Mother of no. 4 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

10

Father of no. 5 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Marriage date _____

Marriage place _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

11

Mother of no. 5 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

12

Father of no. 6 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Marriage date _____

Marriage place _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

13

Mother of no. 6 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

14

Father of no. 7 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Marriage date _____

Marriage place _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

15

Mother of no. 7 B C I E SP SS CH F

Birth date _____

Birthplace _____

Death date _____

Death place _____

4

Gathering and Recording Family History Information

Introduction

This lesson reviews the basics for recording family history information and the importance of being as accurate and complete as possible in keeping records. The lesson is designed to also remind students that as they gather names of their ancestors, they are dealing with people who live as spirits in the postmortal spirit world. The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44), “We without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect” (D&C 128:18).

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) noted one connection between us and our deceased ancestors that illustrates this connection: “The dead are anxiously waiting for the Latter-day Saints to search out their names and then go into the temples to officiate in their behalf, that they may be liberated from their prison house in the spirit world. All of us should find joy in this magnificent labor of love” (“A Temple-Motivated People,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 5).

As students learn more about becoming involved in family history work, they will become increasingly aware that the names they submit to the temple belong to real people who have passed through mortality and will have the opportunity for further eternal progression because of the actions of their descendants—your students.

As you begin each class, you may want to allow opportunity for students to give progress reports, ask questions, and share experiences. If your students are using computers for their family history research, you will need to work adequate time into your lesson periods for follow-up and continuing assistance. For example, students were encouraged in the previous lesson to register on the Church members’ family history website. Some follow-up might be appropriate for them. It is interesting for peers to hear of other students’ success in family history endeavors.

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- The name of each deceased ancestor represents a child of Heavenly Father, a real person in the postmortal spirit world.
- Accurate and organized records facilitate the gathering and sharing of family history information.
- Before temple work can be performed for deceased ancestors, certain information about each ancestor must be obtained.
- There are guidelines for recording family history information.
- Pedigree charts and family group sheets are standard forms used for recording family history information.
- We can obtain valuable information by contacting and interviewing other family members.

Suggestions for Teaching

The Name of Each Deceased Ancestor Represents a Child of Heavenly Father, a Real Person in the Postmortal Spirit World

Write the following information on the board:

Alvin Smith

Born February 11, 1798 or 1799

Died November 19, 1823

Note to teacher: Because of the length and amount of material in this lesson, it is suggested that you take two class periods to teach this lesson.

Tell students that Alvin Smith is an older brother to Joseph Smith. He listened to Joseph's story of the First Vision and believed it. Alvin and the rest of the family also heard Joseph tell about his visits with Moroni. Alvin died a few months following Moroni's first visit, several years prior to Joseph receiving the gold plates. Just before Alvin died, he said to Joseph, "I want you to be a good boy and do everything that lies in your power to obtain the records. Be faithful in receiving instruction and in keeping every commandment that is given you" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 401).

Joseph wrote the following about Alvin: "Alvin, my oldest brother—I remember well the pangs of sorrow that swelled my youthful bosom and almost burst my tender heart when he died. He was the oldest and the noblest of my father's family. He was one of the noblest of the sons of men" (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 485).

Ask students how old Alvin was when he died. (You may want to point to the information written on the board; he was 24 or 25 years old when he died.)

Have students turn to Doctrine and Covenants 137 and note the date of that revelation. (January 21, 1836.) Ask how many years after Alvin's death this revelation was received. (About 12 years.)

Explain that prior to this revelation, the doctrine of salvation for the dead was not clearly known.

Ask a student to read aloud Doctrine and Covenants 137:1–6.

- What does this revelation reveal about Alvin Smith, Adam, and Abraham?

Point out to students that among other things, it teaches that following death we continue to exist as individual beings, with individual identities.

- What impact do you think this revelation had on Joseph Smith and his parents?
- Would Alvin Smith need the ordinances of the gospel performed for him? (Yes.)
- Why? (He died before the ordinances were restored, and he died after reaching the age of accountability—8 years of age; see D&C 68:25–27; 138:32–34, 58–59.)

Ask two students to read aloud the statements in the student manual under the headings "Each name represents a real person" (4.1.1) and "Each person is a member of a family" (4.1.2).

- How might remembering that deceased ancestors are more than just names on a paper affect our attitude about doing family history work?

Write “More than just names” on the board. Testify that just like Alvin Smith, deceased family members of students are real persons in the spirit world. These persons need the saving ordinances of the gospel if they are to gain the greatest happiness available through Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation.

Accurate and Organized Records Facilitate the Gathering and Sharing of Family History Information

Read or display some of the following excerpts, taken from letters sent to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, before computer technology for family history was developed. Ask students to note the humor illustrated in attempts at communicating information that sometimes came out differently than it was intended. (You may want to ask students how the wording contributes to a failure to accurately communicate and how to reword the excerpts to better communicate what they think the original intent was):

<i>“I have had a hard time finding myself in London. If I was from there, I was very small and cannot be found.”</i>
<i>“Enclosed please find my grandmother. I have worked on her for 50 years without success. Now see what you can do.”</i>
<i>“Please baptize this sheet.”</i>
<i>“For running down the Wheelers, I will send \$3 more.”</i>
<i>“My grandfather died at the age of three.”</i>
<i>“Source of information: Family Bible in possession of Aunt Maimie, until the tornado hit Topeka, Kansas. Now only the good Lord knows where it is.”</i>
<i>“I would like to find out if I have any living relatives or dead relatives or ancestors in my family.”</i>

Invite students to give reasons why it is important to keep accurate and organized records in family history. Summarize their answers on the board.

Divide the class into three groups. Assign one group to search Doctrine and Covenants 127:5–9, another Doctrine and Covenants 128:3–4, and a final group Doctrine and Covenants 128:7–8, 24. Have each group identify words and phrases in these verses that relate to the importance of record keeping. Allow time for study as groups, then call for a representative from each group to summarize their findings. Ask students to suggest how we can contribute to the fulfillment of Doctrine and Covenants 128:24.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 132:8 together as a class and ask:

- What do the truths contained in this verse have to do with accurate record keeping?

Tell students that we do not have to be professional genealogists to do family history. But we must record information clearly and accurately, so that it will be understood by others.

Before Temple Work Can Be Performed for Deceased Ancestors, Certain Information about Each Ancestor Must Be Obtained

Ask if anyone knows what minimum information is needed for basic temple ordinances to be performed for a person (list answers on the board). (If necessary, let students review the student manual under the heading “A minimum amount of information is required” [4.3.1].)

- When would it be appropriate to submit names for temple ordinances with only a minimum amount of information? (When additional information cannot *reasonably* be found.) Remember that with the pedigree sheet found at FamilySearch.org, we can clear the name and do the ordinances and then continue to refine the data and add new facts without impacting the individual and changing the fact that his or her ordinances are done. We only want to put the work on hold if there is some question as to whether we have the right person, or whether it is one or more people we are dealing with who have similar names and dates.
- What caution would you give to beginning family history students about using the minimum amount of information necessary to submit names? (Don’t rush to submit names without doing adequate research for information; minimum information may lead to confusion for those doing research later.)

There Are Guidelines for Recording Family History Information

Ask students to open their student manuals to the section “Follow the guidelines for recording names” (4.4.1).

Refer to Alvin Smith’s birth and death dates listed on the board.

- According to the guidelines in the student manual, how would Alvin’s birth and death dates be written?
Born 11 Feb 1798/99 or 11 Feb 1798 or 1799 (Both answers are correct.)
Died 19 Nov 1823
- What other minimum information would be needed to perform temple ordinances? (In addition to the name, gender, and a date for an event, you would need either a location for the event or a relationship to someone who was established in the family tree.)

Tell students that we know the birthplace of Alvin Smith, and there are also guidelines for recording this information.

- What are the guidelines for recording places? (See the student manual under the heading “Follow the guidelines for recording places” [4.4.3].)

Near the birth date on the board, write the birth place: Tunbridge, Orange, Vermont, United States (Orange is the county where the town of Tunbridge was located).

Tell students we also know the place of Alvin’s death. Ask if that should also be listed. (Yes; although it is beyond the minimum information needed to have temple ordinances performed, the records should be as complete as possible.)

Near the death date on the board, write the death place: Manchester, Ontario, New York (Ontario is the county where the city of Manchester was located).

With revelations that followed (such as D&C 127 and 128), Joseph could begin to do the temple work for his brother Alvin.

Note to teacher: Many potential genealogists have become discouraged because they have bad handwriting or they are not as detail oriented as they would like to be. Genealogy software programs are designed to make up for these challenges and allow all users to be good genealogists.

Note to teacher: These exercises are designed as motivators for beginning family history record keeping, rather than creating permanent copies for students' family history files.

You can get copies of pedigree charts and family group records through Church distribution, at family history centers, or at FamilySearch.org.

Students can practice by looking in Joseph Smith—History 1:3 and the section introduction for Doctrine and Covenants 135 for birth and death information about Joseph Smith. Invite a few students to come to the board and record information like they did for Alvin Smith. Let class members make any adjustments, corrections, or comments they have. As an alternative approach to this teaching method for students who bring computers to class, invite students to do this exercise using the family tree feature or some other record manager. These programs handle the formatting of dates and places for you.

Ask students if they have any questions about recording names, dates, or places.

Pedigree Charts and Family Group Sheets Are Standard Forms Used for Recording Family History Information

Give a blank pedigree chart to each class member. Students who bring their computers to class may work on a pedigree chart online. Pedigree charts are used to list several generations of your direct ancestors. Have students fill in the pedigree chart for as many ancestors in their first four generations as they can remember. For now, this is just a practice exercise from memory, so students shouldn't worry about the correctness of the information. The first four generations would include themselves, their parents, their grandparents, and their great-grandparents.

Next, display or pass around a family group record (found at the end of this lesson), or have students retrieve one on their computers. Family group records are used to list all members of an ancestor's family along with dates and places of births, marriages, and ordinances. Have students fill in a blank family group sheet (or write on a piece of paper) the information they can remember for their father and mother's family, which includes themselves and their siblings.

Invite students to form pairs and each take turns summarizing what they have learned so far in this lesson, including the purpose and value of a pedigree chart.

We Can Obtain Valuable Information by Contacting and Interviewing Other Family Members

Ask students to tell the names of two or three family members whom they might talk to in order to gain more information about their family (such as a grandmother or grandfather, aunt, uncle, or cousin).

Working together as a class, make a list of questions on the board they think would be beneficial in finding out information from another family member.

Suggest that if students have access to a recording device, such as a smart phone, they could record their interview with a relative, if the relative feels comfortable being recorded. Let students know that there is voice recognition and transcribing software available to help them if they want to transcribe such interviews to text that they can then share with others.

To conclude the lesson, allow an opportunity for a student volunteer or two to share any success they've had in family history work so far, or any positive feelings about their family history efforts.

Testify that our deceased ancestors now live in the spirit world and many of them await the temple ordinances we can provide for them. Encourage the students to faithfully continue their family history efforts.

Family Group Record

Instructions:

- Write all names as full, main, legal names in the order they are spoken. Write a woman's maiden name (birth name), not her married name.
- Write all dates as day, month, and year, such as 4 Oct 1996.
- Write all places in order of smallest to largest political jurisdiction, separated by commas, such as Tryon, Polk, North Carolina, USA, or Wymondham, Norfolk, England.

Husband			LDS Ordinances	
Name			Date	Temple or place
Birth date (day, month, year)	Birthplace		Baptism	
Christening date	Christening place		Confirmation	
Marriage date	Marriage place		Initiatory	
Death date	Death place		Endowment	
Burial or cremation date	Burial or cremation place		Sealing to parents	
Husband's father Name <input type="checkbox"/> Deceased			Sealing to spouse	
Husband's mother Name <input type="checkbox"/> Deceased				
Other parents, other marriages, and sources of information				
Wife			Baptism	
Name			Confirmation	
Birth date	Birthplace		Initiatory	
Christening date	Christening place		Endowment	
Death date	Death place		Sealing to parents	
Burial or cremation date	Burial or cremation place		Sealing to spouse	
Wife's father Name <input type="checkbox"/> Deceased				
Wife's mother Name <input type="checkbox"/> Deceased				
Other parents, other marriages, and sources of information				
Children List children (whether living or deceased) in order of birth.			Baptism	
1	Name <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female		Confirmation	
	Birth date	Birthplace		Initiatory
	Christening date	Christening place		Endowment
	Marriage date	Marriage place	Spouse's name	Sealing to parents
	Death date	Death place		Sealing to spouse
Other parents, other marriages, and sources of information				
2	Name <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female		Baptism	
	Birth date	Birthplace		Confirmation
	Christening date	Christening place		Initiatory
	Marriage date	Marriage place	Spouse's name	Endowment
	Death date	Death place		Sealing to parents
Other parents, other marriages, and sources of information			Sealing to spouse	

5

Personal Revelation and Family History

Introduction

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught: “The process of finding our ancestors one by one can be challenging but also exciting and rewarding. We often feel spiritual guidance as we go to the sources which identify them. Because this is a very spiritual work, we can expect help from the other side of the veil. We feel a pull from our relatives who are waiting for us to find them so their ordinance work can be done” (“The Phenomenon That Is You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 55).

In this lesson students will study the role of faith as it pertains to family history work and how exercising faith

can bring inspiration from the Holy Ghost to assist them as they search out records of their kindred dead. You can strengthen their resolve to exercise faith so that they may receive personal revelation in the important tasks of identifying their ancestors and providing them the ordinances of salvation. This lesson can also assure students that worthy spirits in the spirit world appreciate our efforts in their behalf and are anxious for their temple ordinances to be performed.

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- Effectively seeking out our kindred dead requires us to exercise faith in Jesus Christ.
- As we proceed in faith, we can receive inspiration from the Holy Ghost to assist us in doing family history work.
- The righteous desires of our ancestors in the spirit world may influence our family history efforts.

Suggestions for Teaching

Effectively Seeking Out Our Kindred Dead Requires Us to Exercise Faith in Jesus Christ

Write: “Faith is a principle of action and of power” on the board, and ask:

- What does it mean to you that faith is a principle of action?
- What does it mean to you that faith is a principle of power?

After several students have shared their responses, explain that as you go through this lesson students will benefit from considering what faith has to do with family history work.

Divide your class into three groups. Assign the members of each group to study one of the following scripture blocks:

1. James 1:5–6; 1 Nephi 15:11; Doctrine and Covenants 8:1, 10; student manual heading “The First Vision is an example of asking in faith” (5.1.2). *Importance of asking in faith.*

2. Alma 32:37–41; student manual heading “Faith is a gift of God” (5.1.1). *Faith is nurtured through righteous actions.*
3. Mosiah 8:18; Ether 12:6, 16, 18; Doctrine and Covenants 35:8; student manual heading “Faith opens doors” (5.1.3). *Miracles are wrought according to faith.*

As students study their materials, ask them to consider answers to these questions:

- What is the general principle being taught? (See italicized statements above.)
- How would you apply family history work to the principle you studied?

After giving students time to report their findings, share this quotation by Elder Kevin W. Pearson of the Seventy:



“Desire, hope, and belief are forms of faith, but faith as a principle of power comes from a consistent pattern of obedient behavior and attitudes. Personal righteousness is a choice. Faith is a gift from God, and one possessed of it can receive enormous spiritual power” (“Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 39).

Ask students:

- What kind of “spiritual power” would you like to receive from the Lord as you work on family history?
- What did Elder Pearson say we must do to receive this power?
- How have you felt like the Lord has rewarded your faith in the past? (Answers here need not be directly related to family history work.)

Assure students that as they press forward with faith in the Lord and seek His divine blessings and guidance, they may receive the spiritual power that Elder Pearson spoke of in seeking after their kindred dead.

As We Proceed in Faith, We Can Receive Inspiration from the Holy Ghost to Assist Us in Doing Family History Work

Write the following thought on the board:

As we proceed in faith, we can receive inspiration from the Holy Ghost to assist us in doing family history work.

Ask students:

- How would you anticipate that the Holy Ghost might help someone involved in family history work?

Have a student read aloud from the student manual under the heading “Revelation comes in different ways” (5.2.3). As the student reads this commentary, have the rest of the class consider how the Holy Ghost might manifest Himself to those participating in family history work.

Note to teacher: Many of your students may be young and have many important commitments in their lives. Remind your class that all things are to be “done in wisdom and order” (Mosiah 4:27). They do not need to spend an inordinate amount of time on family history work in order to receive the blessings discussed in this lesson.

Note to teacher: You might consider using some of the references in the student manual heading “Scriptures to study and ponder” for this section to help your discussion of this important doctrine.

- In addition to the ways we have already discussed, what other ways might the Holy Ghost give inspiration to you while you are doing family history work? (Possible answers are given below.)

The name of a certain ancestor seems to occupy your mind.

You may feel inclined to pursue a certain family line in your research.

You could feel impressed to look for more information about a certain ancestor.

You might be guided to look for information in a certain area or location.

You might feel a sense of peace that an individual has accepted the temple work performed on his or her behalf.

You may recall where certain information is stored.

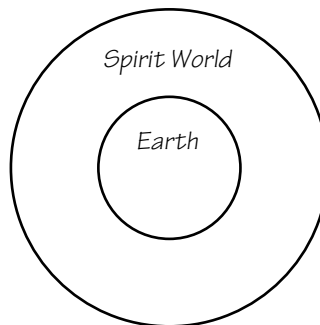
You may be led regarding whom you can ask for assistance and what questions to ask.

Consider dividing your class into four groups. Assign each group to read one of the accounts from the student manual under the headings “Guidance of the Spirit helps us to do family history” (5.2.4), “Are you not on the Lord’s errand?” (5.2.5), “A stirring within my soul told me there was something more I could do” (5.2.6), or “The name almost leapt off the page” (5.2.7). As students read, encourage them to write down words or phrases that indicate the individual was receiving inspiration and guidance from the Spirit. After sufficient time have students briefly share their stories with the class and tell how the Holy Ghost assisted the individual in each story.

Invite students to share how the Holy Ghost has already given them inspiration as they have worked on family history. Share your testimony of the reality of the third member of the Godhead and that as they proceed in faith, hope, and charity, they can receive His inspiration and assistance in doing family history work.

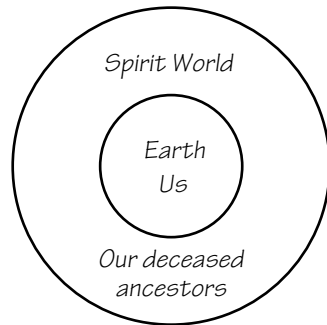
The Righteous Desires of Our Ancestors in the Spirit World May Influence Our Family History Efforts

Draw a circle on the board, and label the interior “Earth.” Draw another circle around the outside of the first circle, and label it “Spirit World.”



Have students turn to the student manual under the heading “We can receive guidance from beyond the grave” (5.3.1). Ask a student to read aloud the quotations from Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1873–1939) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Add “Us” in the inner circle; write “Our deceased ancestors” in the outer circle.



Point to the drawing on the board and ask:

- In what ways can family history work connect us and our deceased ancestors? (Possible answers include: We receive blessings because of our efforts to help others in the spirit world; we turn our thoughts to them, as perhaps their thoughts are turned to us; if they are converted to the gospel, they need someone on earth to do the proxy work for them; when we complete ordinances for our deceased ancestors, generations are linked together.)

Invite a student to read the statement by President James E. Faust of the First Presidency from the introduction to this chapter. Ask students to explain what that statement means to them. (You could write it on the board.)

“We feel a pull from our relatives who are waiting for us to find them so their ordinance work can be done.”

Share with students that one possible meaning is that if we have deceased relatives in the spirit world who are ready for their ordinance work to be done on earth, we can be influenced through the Holy Ghost to feel eager to do their work. Or, we could have a lingering feeling that there is something we need to do next in family history work.

Have students silently read Moroni 7:35–37, looking for how these verses might apply to family history work. After students have shared their thoughts, you might share one of the stories from the student manual under the heading “The Righteous Desires of Our Ancestors in the Spirit World May Influence Our Family History Efforts” (5.3).

If you have one or more students in your class who seem filled with enthusiasm for family history work and work consistently at it, consider having them share with the class what they are doing, what successes they have had, and how they have felt the workings of the Holy Ghost within them as they do this work.

Conclude the lesson by sharing your testimony of the importance of demonstrating faith through obedience and persistent effort and of the role of the Holy Ghost as we participate in family history work. Invite students to take a few minutes to write down how they plan to apply the things they have learned in today’s lesson. Close the class by encouraging students to press forward with faith in their family history efforts and to act on the inspired thoughts and feelings that come to them regarding their efforts in behalf of their deceased relatives.

6

Computers and Family History Research

Introduction

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the commission to do family history work has been made easier by new technology: "The Prophet Joseph Smith said, 'The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead.' [Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 475.] New technology makes it easier than ever to fulfill that responsibility" ("Generations Linked in Love," *Ensign*, May 2010, 92–93).

This lesson focuses on computer resources that can help students do family history research. Students should

already have been introduced to FamilySearch.org and encouraged to register online. Ideally, they will have gained at least some experience with the site by the time you teach this lesson.

From this point forward in the course, students should become increasingly adept at using FamilySearch to identify their deceased ancestors and to provide the saving ordinances for them in temples. You might start each class by allowing students some time to report their progress.

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- The Spirit of the Lord has influenced technological advancements to further His work, including family history.
- The Church's family history department develops and maintains computer resources for family history research.
- Other sources are available to help you progress in your family history research.

Suggestions for Teaching

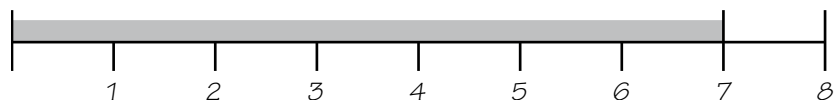
Note to teacher: Because of the length and amount of material in this lesson, it is suggested that you take two class periods to teach this lesson.

The Spirit of the Lord Has Influenced Technological Advancements to Further His Work, Including Family History

Ask students:

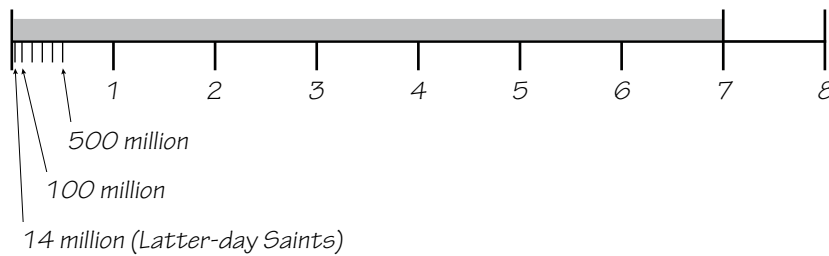
- About how many of Heavenly Father's children live on the earth right now? (The current estimate of the world's population is just over 7 billion.)

Draw a line on the board representing this population as shown:



- If this shaded area represents the total number of Heavenly Father's children now living on the earth, how much of the line would represent the number of Heavenly Father's children who are Latter-day Saints?

Draw a representation of the current Church membership (14–15 million) as shown:



Ask students:

- How are so few of us going to be able to bring the blessings of the gospel to so many of Heavenly Father's children—both those who are living now and those who have lived in the past?

Note: Scholars have estimated that around 75 billion people have lived on the earth up until now. Also, students may benefit from reading President Brigham Young's (1801–1877) statement in the student manual under the heading "Modern inventions accelerate family history work" (6.1.1).

You may have a student ask, "Why not wait until the Millennium, since the research will be so much easier then?" There are various ways to respond to such an inquiry; the following information should be helpful:

Family history and temple work benefit the living to the extent that even if it failed to also assist the dead at all, it would still be of inestimable worth to the living. Family history work is a tutorial to keep our focus on the work of the Lord. Repeated experience in the temple keeps the sacred words of the endowment and sealing fresh in our memories. Every time we go to the temple for the dead, we have reviewed for us what Heavenly Father expects of us. Genealogical research and temple work also give us opportunities to experience increased guidance from the Holy Ghost.

After students respond, ask them to read Joel 2:28–29.

- What did Joel prophesy would happen? (The Lord would "pour out" His Spirit.)

Tell students that President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) identified part of the fulfillment of this scripture about the Lord pouring His Spirit upon all flesh. Ask students to listen for what President Hinckley identified as you have a student read President Hinckley's statement in the student manual under the heading "Ancient prophecies are being fulfilled" (6.1.3).

- What did President Hinckley identify as part of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy? (Modern inventions.)
- What inventions and technological improvements have you seen during your lifetime?
- What would you say about the pace of technological advancement since the time your grandparents were your age?
- How has the work of the Lord benefitted as a result of these technological advancements?

Note to teacher: In addition to the acceleration of the work because of computers and an increasing number of temples across the earth, you might also point out to students that "the great work of the millennium will be the temple ordinances for the dead who are worthy to receive it" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:121). During the Millennium, the dead will be able to more freely help locate their records.

Note: If family history work is not mentioned, ask: “How has family history work benefitted as a result of technological advancements?”

Read the statement by Elder Russell M. Nelson from the student manual under the heading “Joel’s prophecy is being fulfilled” (6.1.4).

Indicate to students that in the October 2011 general conference of the Church, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles specifically addressed his remarks to the youth of the Church. Have a student read his comments from the student manual under the heading “Youth have skills to contribute” (6.1.5).

- What reason did Elder Bednar give for youth of the Church to become more involved in family history work?
- How have you found this to be true?

Testify that the Lord has increased the power and ability of worthy Latter-day Saints to help redeem the dead through inspired modern technology.

The Church’s Family History Department Develops and Maintains Computer Resources for Family History Research

If you have the classroom facilities to show demonstrations from the Internet, or if your class meets in a facility where computers are available for student use (such as a family history center), demonstrate or guide the students through several exercises on the FamilySearch website (FamilySearch.org).

Note to teacher: This will require a large portion of time; perhaps one or more class sessions.

If you do not have classroom computer resources, do your best to explain (or have a family history consultant explain) some of the opportunities available on the FamilySearch website, and make assignments for students to practice at home (students should have already registered and started becoming familiar with the FamilySearch website from assignments in previous lessons).

Use some of the help or tutoring options as you demonstrate or move through the various screens of FamilySearch.

Other Sources Are Available to Help You Progress in Your Family History Research

This would be a good time to have a family history consultant in your area attend class to briefly introduce himself or herself and explain the purpose and calling of a family history consultant. (Be sure to receive approval for the visit from your S&I leader and from the consultant’s bishop.)

Ask if there is a student who would like to share how some of the resources provided by the Church have been helpful to him or her, or how a ward or branch family history consultant has helped him or her with family history work.

Submitting Names for Temple Ordinances

7

Introduction

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified: “Together we are striving to organize the family tree for all of God’s children. This is an enormous endeavor with enormous rewards” (“Generations Linked in Love,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 93).

In this lesson students will review the urgency spoken of by latter-day prophets for them to search out the names

of their ancestors. They will also review the guidelines for submitting those names to temples and learn how to use computer tools to determine what ordinances are needed for their known ancestors. Help your students see that the detailed efforts they put into the process of identifying and clearing names for temple ordinances will be of great worth in the Lord’s plan for the salvation of His children.

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- Latter-day prophets have expressed urgency for us to perform saving ordinances for the dead.
- Church family history databases help determine which gospel ordinances are needed for known ancestors.
- Follow the guidelines for submitting names for temple ordinances.
- If you have a current temple recommend and have been endowed, you may serve as proxy for those persons of the same gender whose names you have cleared for temple ordinances, or you may allow others to serve as proxy for persons you have cleared for temple ordinances.



Suggestions for Teaching

Latter-day Prophets Have Expressed Urgency for Us to Perform Saving Ordinances for the Dead

Have students read Doctrine and Covenants 138:32–35 and share what the verses teach about the work being done in the spirit world. Then ask:

- Considering for a moment how much work it takes to search out, record, and prepare a name for temple ordinances to be performed, what kind of preparation do you think is being made on the other side of the veil by the individual you are doing the work for?
- Why do you think righteous spirits in the spirit world might be anxious to have their temple work completed?

Note to teacher: As you teach this portion of the lesson, consider using the letter from the First Presidency found at the end of this lesson.

Ask students to open their student manuals to the headings “Angels need our help” (7.1.1) and “The work of redeeming the dead must accelerate” (7.1.3). (You may want to write these titles on the board for students to refer back to as they work.) Ask students to read silently and mark the sentences or phrases that emphasize the urgency of work for the dead. After allowing students sufficient time, ask several students to share one or two of the items they selected and to explain what they mean to them. Then ask:

- From your understanding of the Lord’s plan of salvation, why do you think there is an urgency to perform the temple work on behalf of our kindred dead? (We are in the last days prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ; in the Lord’s plan, this is how He has made provision for those who died without a knowledge of the gospel to receive all the promised blessings; we are the only ones on the earth authorized to do this work on their behalf.)

Bear testimony of the truth and importance of the Savior’s mission to redeem all of Heavenly Father’s children. Help students understand that it is a privilege for us to participate in that mission.

Church Family History Databases Help Determine Which Gospel Ordinances Are Needed for Known Ancestors

Ask students to share any experiences they have had using FamilySearch to determine the temple ordinance status of any of their ancestors.

If classroom computer facilities are available, log on to FamilySearch and demonstrate (or have a student log on and demonstrate) finding the ordinance information for individuals or families in your (or the student’s) ancestral lines. (Be respectful of any desires to protect personal information. This activity will work only if someone is willing to display information about his or her family lines.)

Another option would be to log on to FamilySearch and read information on tutorials and help screens relating to temple ordinance information. (*Note:* These activities will require a considerable amount of class time.)

Follow the Guidelines for Submitting Names for Temple Ordinances

Have students open their student manuals to the headings “Follow the Guidelines for Submitting Names for Temple Ordinances” (7.3) and “There Are Guidelines for Submitting Names to the Temple When There Are Unusual Circumstances” (7.4). Divide the class into small groups, and have each group make up a quiz of five to seven questions relating to guidelines for doing temple work for the dead (make sure the answers can be found in the student manual).

After groups are finished composing their questions, have each group pair up with another group and take turns asking their questions to each other.

After the groups are finished, show a computer demonstration of the steps needed to submit a name for temple work. Be sure to allow time for questions or comments from the students about guidelines for submitting names for ordinance work.

If You Have a Current Temple Recommend and Have Been Endowed, You May Serve as Proxy for Those Persons of the Same Gender Whose Names You Have Cleared for Temple Ordinances, or You May Allow Others to Serve as Proxy for Persons You Have Cleared for Temple Ordinances

Write “Proxy” on the board.

- What does it mean for a person to act as “proxy” for another person? (It means that someone has the right to represent another person or perform an act on his or her behalf.)

Add the following explanation to the board: “Someone who does something for another person.”

Explain that in the Church we often use the word *proxy* when speaking of doing something for someone else who cannot do it for himself or herself. Add this additional information to the board.

Proxy: Someone who does something for another person who cannot do it for himself or herself.

- Using our chalkboard definition as a guide, who can we read about in the scriptures performing proxy work on our behalf? (Jesus Christ—He atoned for our sins and was resurrected so that we could also be resurrected.)
- How does the word *proxy* apply to family history work? (We perform proxy baptisms for the dead; we serve as proxies for other ordinances of salvation for our deceased ancestors.)
- What is required in order for us to go to the temple and act as proxy for those whose names we have submitted to the temple? (Obtain a valid temple recommend from local priesthood leaders.)

You might consider closing this lesson by inviting one or two students who have a temple recommend to briefly share how being interviewed for a temple recommend has been a blessing to them. Close by sharing your testimony about how we reflect the Savior’s love when we provide the ordinances of salvation for our deceased ancestors.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
OFFICE OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
47 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE STREET, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84150-1200

October 8, 2012

To: Members of the Church

(To be read in sacrament meeting.)

Dear Brethren and Sisters:

Names for Temple Ordinances


When members of the Church find the names of their ancestors and take those names to the temple for ordinance work, the temple experience can be greatly enriched. Members with limited ability to do their own family history research are encouraged to perform vicarious ordinances with names provided by other members or by the temple.

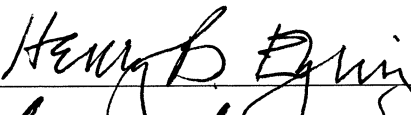
We especially encourage youth and young single adults to use for temple work their own family names or the names of ancestors of their ward and stake members. Priesthood leaders should assure that young people and their families learn the doctrine of turning their hearts to their fathers and the blessings of temple attendance.

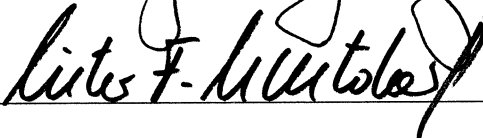
Some Church members have large numbers of family names reserved so they can personally attend to the temple work. We encourage them to release these names in a timely manner so the necessary ordinances can be performed.

We appreciate your efforts to seek out the names of your ancestors and to provide essential temple ordinances. We pray that the spirit of this sacred work will increase in the hearts of all members of the Church.

Sincerely,







The First Presidency

The Abrahamic Covenant

Introduction

The covenants the Lord made with Abraham are the same gospel covenants available to us today. God promised Abraham and his posterity that these gospel covenants and their resulting blessings would be made available to all the inhabitants of the world through Abraham's posterity. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles defined what is meant by the posterity or "seed of Abraham":

"There are two distinct meanings of the expression, 'seed of Abraham': (1) There are his literal descendants who have sprung from his loins and who by virtue of their favored family status are natural heirs of the same blessings which Abraham himself enjoyed; and (2) There are those (including adopted members of the family)

who become the 'seed of Abraham' in the full spiritual sense by conformity to the same gospel principles which Abraham obeyed. In this spiritual sense, the disobedient literal descendants of Abraham, being 'children of the flesh,' are not 'accounted' as Abraham's seed, but are cut off from the blessings of the gospel" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:459–60).

This lesson will highlight the blessings promised through the Abrahamic covenant and help students understand their vital relationship to the ancient patriarch Abraham. It will also encourage them to continue their family history work in order to provide the promises of Abraham to their deceased ancestors.

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- Jehovah made a covenant with Abraham that included promises of gospel blessings to Abraham and the entire world through Abraham's posterity.
- The Abrahamic covenant has been restored in our day.
- All who accept the gospel and are baptized are the seed of Abraham and, through faithfulness, inherit the promised blessings.
- Family history work and vicarious temple ordinances extend the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant to individuals in the spirit world.

Suggestions for Teaching

Jehovah Made a Covenant with Abraham That Included Promises of Gospel Blessings to Abraham and the Entire World through Abraham's Posterity

Have students imagine that someone they know has died and left a will that names them as an heir.

- Normally, who are named as heirs to an inheritance? (Family members)
- How might parents and grandparents who have no material wealth still leave their posterity an inheritance? (Family name, a reputation, Church membership, etc.)

Note to teacher: You will need to watch your time in this lesson so that you will leave enough time at the end of the lesson to teach how the Abrahamic covenant can be extended to those in the spirit world.

Explain to your students that today they will study about the great prophet and patriarch Abraham. The Lord promised Abraham that because of his faithfulness, his posterity would be entitled to an inheritance upon condition of their faithful obedience. Sometimes this promise is referred to as the Abrahamic covenant. Ask several students to share with the class their understanding of the word *covenant* as it relates to the gospel. After several responses, you might share the following definition with your class:

"An agreement between God and man, but they do not act as equals in the agreement. God gives the conditions for the covenant, and men agree to do what he asks them to do. God then promises men certain blessings for their obedience" (Guide to the Scriptures, "Covenant," scriptures.LDS.org).

Explain to your class that because of Abraham's righteous desires and his unwavering faithfulness, the Lord entered into a covenant with him.

Divide the class into two groups. Assign half of the class to study Genesis 13:14–16; 17:4–6, 8; Abraham 1:18–19; 2:9–11 and to make a list of the promises the Lord made to Abraham. Assign the other half of the class to study Genesis 17:1–9; Abraham 1:19; 2:9–11 and to make a list of what Abraham was expected to do in order to receive the promised blessings.

While students are studying, copy the following chart onto the board, leaving space at the bottom:

<i>Abrahamic Covenant</i>	
<i>Promises Made to Abraham</i>	<i>Abraham's Responsibilities</i>
<i>Genesis 13:14–16; 17:4–6, 8 Abraham 1:18–19; 2:9–11</i>	<i>Genesis 17:1–9 Abraham 1:19; 2:9–11</i>

After sufficient time, invite a few students from each of the two groups to come to the board and write their findings under the proper heading. Though not limited to these ideas, the lists should include the following information:

<i>Abrahamic Covenant</i>	
<i>Promises Made to Abraham</i>	<i>Abraham's Responsibilities</i>
<i>Genesis 13:14–16; 17:4–6, 8 Abraham 1:18–19; 2:9–11</i>	<i>Genesis 17:1–9 Abraham 1:19; 2:9–11</i>
<i>Inherit land of Canaan Posterity as numerous as sands upon the earth Receive the priesthood Salvation and exaltation</i>	<i>Walk with the Lord and be perfect Minister gospel to families of the earth Minister Lord's name and priesthood to families of the earth Keep the covenant</i>

To help students understand more about this covenant, invite them to read from the student manual under the heading “There are blessings promised through the Abrahamic covenant” (8.1.3). Have students look for the specific blessings promised to Abraham in the covenant the Lord made with him.

- In addition to Abraham, who else is entitled to the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant? (All of Abraham’s posterity)
- Why do you think making and keeping this covenant is important to members of the Church today?

The Abrahamic Covenant Has Been Restored in Our Day

Ask a student to briefly explain the effects of the Great Apostasy following the ministry of Jesus Christ and His Apostles in New Testament times. (Possible explanations could include: The priesthood was lost from the earth, there were no apostles and prophets, doctrines were changed, and so forth.) Ask students:

- What effect did the Apostasy have on the ability of Abraham’s posterity to receive the promised blessings? (Since the priesthood was taken from the earth, they could no longer receive the promises; the doctrine concerning the Abrahamic covenant was lost or corrupted.)

Ask another student to briefly explain a few of the blessings of the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith. (Possible answers include: The priesthood was restored, the Church was again led by prophets and apostles, sealing ordinances could be performed, true doctrine was taught, Abraham’s posterity would once again be able to receive the promises, and so forth.) Be sure to emphasize that the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant would not be available without the Restoration of the gospel.

Have students read from the student manual under the heading “Blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are conferred in temples” (8.2.3), looking for what is made available to us through the Abrahamic covenant. Then discuss with the class:

- How does the availability of the blessings promised to Abraham and his posterity have the potential to strengthen families and to guide us in the decisions we make in life?

All Who Accept the Gospel and Are Baptized Are the Seed of Abraham and, through Faithfulness, Inherit the Promised Blessings

Ask students if they know anyone who is adopted. Then ask:

- When someone is adopted into a family, generally what benefits are they afforded? (In most cases they are nurtured and loved and cared for just as if they had been born into the family.)

Have a student read Galatians 3:26–29. As they listen, have the class consider how a person becomes the seed of Abraham.

- According to Paul’s teachings in Galatians 3:26–29, how does a person become the seed of Abraham? (We must first become Christ’s through faith in Jesus Christ and baptism.)

Have students pair up with another member of the class and read aloud to each other from the student manual under the headings “Are you of the seed of Abraham?” (8.3.1) and “The Abrahamic covenant helps define us” (8.3.3). Then have students discuss the following questions with their partners:

- What would you say to a person who is concerned that they might not be a literal descendant of Abraham?
- What does it mean to you to be the seed of Abraham?

Family History Work and Vicarious Temple Ordinances Extend the Blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant to Individuals in the Spirit World

- Have students turn to Doctrine and Covenants 2, and ask a volunteer to read that section aloud.

Whom do you think the *fathers* are in the phrase “promises made to the fathers” in verse 2?

Summarize by saying that one definition of the *fathers* would be ancient prophets, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who received and taught the gospel and desired that everyone have an opportunity to accept it. President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) provided this additional definition:



“The fathers are our dead ancestors who died without the privilege of receiving the gospel, but who received the promise that the time would come when that privilege would be granted them” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:127).

- From our lesson today, what would “the promises made to the fathers” be referring to? (The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that they would one day inherit the earth, have innumerable posterity, and be exalted; those who died without receiving the opportunity to receive the gospel could one day receive the same promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.)

Copy the following diagram onto the board:

Blessings and Promises of the Fathers Available to Abraham's Posterity



Abraham

*Descendants
of Abraham
in previous
generations*

*Latter-day
descendants
of Abraham*

Invite students to share how they think this diagram appropriately relates to Abraham and his posterity. Explain to your class that this chain illustrates Abraham and all of his posterity—they are all linked together and entitled to the blessings of salvation and eternal family. Then ask:

- What effect did the Apostasy have on the ability of Abraham's descendants to receive the promised blessings of the Abrahamic covenant? (They no longer had access to the blessings. *Erase the middle and right-hand links in the chain.*)
- What happened to the chain when the gospel was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith? (*Draw the right-hand link back on the chain over the caption "Latter-day descendants of Abraham."*) Explain that through baptism and temple covenants, faithful Church members may receive all the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. (*The middle link should still be missing.*)
- When we go to the temple and do work for our deceased ancestors—many of whom lived during the time of the Great Apostasy or who never had the opportunity to accept the gospel in mortality—what happens to the middle link and the chain we erased? (*Fill in the middle link of the chain.*)

Share with students the following quotation by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"Without the Atonement of the Lord, none of these blessings would be available to us, and we could not become worthy and prepared to return to dwell in the presence of God" ("The Atonement and the Value of One Soul," *Ensign*, May 2004, 85).

Ask students what they might do to the illustration to show that through our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation, Jesus Christ made all of this possible through His Atonement. You might draw a circle around all the information and write "Through our Father's plan, Jesus makes this possible" somewhere on the board.

Before concluding the lesson, you might also add “our posterity” to the board and point out that through faithfulness, the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are also available to our posterity. As you conclude this lesson, invite students to share any recent successes they have experienced doing family history research. Ask them to share any thoughts they might have as they consider what it means to extend the promises of the Abrahamic covenant to their deceased ancestors. Share your testimony about the great love Heavenly Father has for all His children. Every blessing promised to Abraham is available to all of God’s children. Invite students to do all they can to make it possible for their ancestors to receive all of the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant.

The Spirit World and the Redemption of the Dead

9

Introduction

A correct understanding of the doctrine of redemption of the dead makes family history and temple work more than just an interesting hobby. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the perspective that Latter-day Saints could use regarding the vastness of the Lord’s work in the postmortal spirit world:

“Often Church members suffer from a lack of perspective, perhaps understandably, as to the vastness and intensity of the Lord’s work in the spirit world. The scope is enormous! Demographers estimate that some sixty to seventy billion people have lived on this planet thus far. Without diminishing in any way the importance of the absolutely vital and tandem work on this side of the veil, we do need a

better grasp of ‘things as they really will be’ (Jacob 4:13). Otherwise, we can so easily come to regard family history as a quaint hobby and its resulting temple work as something we will get around to later” (*The Promise of Discipleship* [2001], 105).

This lesson will help students gain an appreciation for the Lord’s great love and mercy in providing opportunities for salvation to all His children, both here on earth and in the world of spirits. As we do family history and temple work, we are helping to fulfill the commission to preach the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people (see D&C 133:37) by extending gospel blessings to those who did not receive them during mortal life.

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all of God’s children may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.
- Between the death and resurrection of the physical body, the spirit lives in the spirit world and has the opportunity to continue to progress toward perfection.
- Jesus Christ initiated the preaching of the gospel to those in spirit prison.
- Many in the spirit world anxiously await the blessings of gospel ordinances.

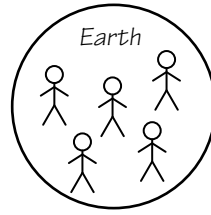
Suggestions for Teaching

Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, All of God’s Children May Be Saved by Obedience to the Laws and Ordinances of the Gospel

Draw a large circle on the board and label it “Earth.” Draw several stick figures inside the circle representing people. State that these figures represent people of different nationalities, philosophies, religious beliefs, professions, and time periods. They are all children of our Heavenly Father.



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Emphasize to your students that each has left Heavenly Father’s presence to live here on the earth. Ask students:

- What are the requirements for God’s children to return and live with Him again?

Consider separating your students into four groups. Write the following scripture blocks on the board:

<p><u>Adam’s Day</u> Moses 6:50–53</p>	<p><u>New Testament</u> Acts 2:37–38; 4:10–12</p>	<p><u>Book of Mormon</u> 3 Nephi 27:16, 19–20</p>	<p><u>Restoration</u> D&C 18:22–26</p>
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Assign each group to study one of the four scripture blocks and to identify what their assigned scriptures teach about what is required to be saved. When the groups have finished studying, have a member of each group come to the board and write what they discovered under the appropriate heading. Then ask the class:

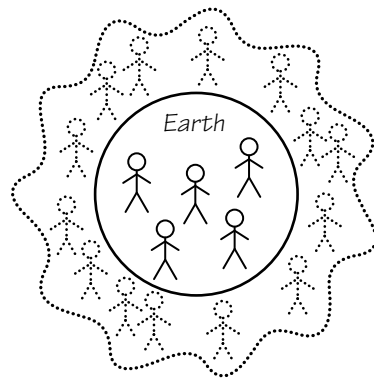
- What do you notice when you compare the requirements of salvation you read about with the requirements for other time periods and people? (They are the same. Basically, have faith in Jesus Christ and the Atonement, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end.)

To further confirm the necessity of repentance and baptism to enter the kingdom of God, consider sharing with your students the following quotation by the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44):



“If there was sin among men, repentance was as necessary at one time or age of the world as another—and that other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. If, then, Abel was a righteous man he had to become so by keeping the commandments; if Enoch was righteous enough to come into the presence of God, and walk with him, he must have become so by keeping his commandments, and so of every righteous person, whether it was Noah, . . . Abraham, . . . Jacob, . . . Moses, . . . or whether it was Jesus Christ himself, who had no need of repentance, having done no sin. . . . Surely, then, if it became John and Jesus Christ, the Saviour, to fulfil all righteousness to be baptised—so surely, then, it will become every other person that seeks the kingdom of heaven to go and do likewise” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 93–94).

Draw on the board a wavy circle outside the “earth” and add some dotted stick figures to represent postmortal spirits in the spirit world. Explain to students that this represents spirits in the spirit world.



Help students understand the location of the spirit world by having them read the quotation by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) from the student manual under the heading “The spirit world is close to this world” (9.2.2).

Ask a student to read Doctrine and Covenants 138:32–34 while the rest of the class follows along, looking for what is taught to those in the spirit world.

- How does what is taught in the spirit world compare to the gospel taught on earth? (Same teachings and same gospel.)
- What conclusions do you draw from what we have discussed so far? (Possible answers include: The requirements of salvation are the same for the living as for the dead.)

Invite a student to read the quotation by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles from the student manual under the heading “The Atonement of Jesus Christ is central to the plan of salvation” (9.1.1).

- How do the requirements listed on the board relate to the Atonement? (Faith in Jesus Christ includes faith in His Atonement; repentance involves drawing upon the Atonement to have strength to repent and to be cleansed of sin; through baptism and the ministering of the Holy Ghost we can be forgiven of our sins.)
- What suggestions do you have to help us remember that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is the central focus of our Heavenly Father’s plan for us?
- How does knowing that the requirements for salvation are the same for every one of God’s children help you to trust in His plan?

Between the Death and Resurrection of the Physical Body, the Spirit Lives in the Spirit World and Has the Opportunity to Continue to Progress toward Perfection

Have students quickly look in Alma 40:12–13 and identify the two divisions in the spirit world. (“Paradise” and “outer darkness,” which in this context means spirit prison.) Have students take a closer look in Alma 40:11–14 and identify words and phrases that describe the state of the righteous and the state of the wicked in these divisions of the spirit world. Consider writing “Paradise” and “Spirit prison” on the board and writing words and phrases under each as students give their responses. (*Note:* You may need to erase the board before doing this.)

<i>Paradise</i>	<i>Spirit prison</i>

Before continuing with the lesson, explain to students that the Lord sometimes simplifies His message. For example, John 5:29 describes how the Savior referred to two major resurrections: “the resurrection of life” and “the resurrection of damnation.” Yet even within these two categories, we learn that there will be an order to how the Resurrection proceeds—not all who come forth in the resurrection of life (sometimes called the First Resurrection, or the resurrection of the just) will be resurrected at the same time. Nor will all in the resurrection of damnation (sometimes referred to as the Second Resurrection or resurrection of the unjust) be resurrected at the same time (see D&C 88:99–102). Within spirit prison there are likely many different levels and gradations of wickedness—those who lived the most extreme of wicked lives on earth, countless others who lived very righteously on earth, and persons of every other level of obedience and disobedience. They all have one thing in common: they did not accept the gospel and proper baptism while in mortality.

Point out also that sometimes the Lord speaks in extremes to emphasize His point. For example, in Doctrine and Covenants 19:5–7, the Lord describes the torment that awaits the wicked “that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men” (verse 7). The terms used in Alma 40:13–14 (which may be written on the board) may likewise “work upon the hearts of the children of men” to motivate them to seek after spirit paradise.

Introduce Doctrine and Covenants 138 by sharing the historical commentary in the student manual under the heading “President Joseph F. Smith received a vision of the redemption of the dead” (9.3.1). Then ask half of the students to quietly study verses 12–14 and the other half to study verses 20–24, looking for additional words that describe conditions of the wicked in the spirit world. You might add students’ findings to your lists on the board.

- Take a moment and look at the conditions in spirit prison. How can this motivate you to want to search out your kindred dead and ensure that saving ordinances are done for them in the temple?

Give students several minutes to study the student manual under the headings “Progress toward exaltation takes time” (9.2.5) and “Trials and testing continue” (9.2.6). Then have students turn to another member of the class and briefly discuss what these readings teach about some of the purposes of the spirit world. Ask your students why it is important and helpful to know that after we die we continue to grow and progress in the spirit world.

Jesus Christ Initiated the Preaching of the Gospel to Those in Spirit Prison

Ask students to search Doctrine and Covenants 138:1–4 and identify the two major topics President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) was pondering when he received this revelation. After students have identified the Atonement and the love manifested by the Father and Son, point out to them that in this revelation President Smith saw that the Savior did not go in person to those in spirit prison; He went only to those who were in paradise and had lived righteously while on the earth. Give students a minute or two to read verses 25–28 quietly to discover the question President Smith pondered while he was seeing this vision of the spirit world.

- How would you state in your own words the question President Smith contemplated? (How could the Savior preach the gospel to such a vast number of people when He was in the spirit world for only three days?)

Write the following questions on the board, or distribute them on a small handout:

*What did the Savior do while He was in the spirit world?
 What is the significance of “all” in Doctrine and Covenants 138:30–31, 37?
 How does the preaching of the gospel in the spirit world demonstrate God’s perfect love?*

Give students several minutes to study verses 29–31, 37, 57, looking for answers to the questions on the board. After sufficient time, invite students to discuss their answers with another member of the class. After students have finished discussing with one another, consider asking:

- How do these verses help you see how the Atonement reaches those in the spirit world?
- Why do these truths matter to you? What difference does it make whether a person knows these truths regarding the spirit world?

Time permitting, you might read and discuss with your class the commentary in the student manual under the heading “There is perfect order and structure in the spirit world” (9.3.3).



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Many in the Spirit World Anxiously Await the Blessings of Gospel Ordinances

Ask students to think of something they had great anticipation for in the past, but had to wait a long time to receive. Have a few students briefly share their experience with the class. Then invite students to think about how their waiting might compare with those waiting for the opportunity to receive salvation in the spirit world. Consider asking students to share some of their experiences researching their deceased ancestors up until now. In particular, ask them to share information regarding birth and death dates—how long they have been in the spirit world. What have they discovered about what an individual ancestor was like? How do they feel about extending the blessings of the gospel to this individual? (If students have not had such an experience, be prepared to share an experience of your own.)

To prepare students to learn about how well the gospel is accepted in the spirit world, consider asking a returned missionary in your class to take a few minutes and share with the class the overall success rate of missionaries in his or her mission. Of all the people contacted in his or her mission, about how many were baptized? What were some of the more prevalent challenges missionaries faced in teaching the gospel in that mission? What does that student think could be done to bring greater success in preaching the gospel?

Have a student read the quotations by President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) and President Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901) in the student manual under the heading “Very few will not accept the gospel” (9.4.3).

To conclude the lesson, ask the class:

- As you’ve considered how long some of your ancestors have waited in the spirit world and what your efforts make available to them, what feelings or spiritual confirmations have you felt about the truthfulness of family history work?

Close with your testimony regarding the love of God and His Son in providing the opportunity for all of Heavenly Father’s children to receive salvation.

Covenants, Ordinances, and Temples in the Plan of Salvation

10

Introduction

Heavenly Father has revealed through His prophets the pathway to the celestial kingdom. Obedience to the Author of the plan of salvation, our Heavenly Father, requires diligent observance of His laws, including covenants and ordinances performed in the temple, the house of the Lord.

“Through the work we do in temples, all people who have lived on the earth can have an equal opportunity to receive the fulness of the gospel and the ordinances of salvation so they can inherit a place in the highest degree of celestial glory” (*Gospel Principles* [2009], 272).

In this lesson students will learn the meaning and importance of covenants and ordinances. They will gain an overview of the covenants and ordinances performed in temples and review some of the blessings that come with faithful temple attendance. Through regular temple attendance, they may receive those blessings themselves and give many people in the spirit world the opportunity to receive those same blessings.

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- A covenant is a solemn agreement between God and man according to God’s terms.
- Covenants and ordinances of salvation are necessary for exaltation in the celestial kingdom.
- In the temple, we participate in sacred ordinances and make covenants essential for exaltation.
- Ordinances for deceased ancestors can only be performed in temples.
- We are blessed through temple worship.

Suggestions for Teaching

A Covenant Is a Solemn Agreement between God and Man According to God’s Terms

Ask students to use the Bible Dictionary or Guide to the Scriptures to help them determine and write down three or four important ideas about gospel covenants (see Bible Dictionary, “Covenant”; Guide to the Scriptures, “Covenant,” scriptures.LDS.org). After sufficient time, have students share what they wrote, summarizing their comments on the board.

To help students see that God is the one who establishes the terms or conditions of the covenants we enter into with Him (see statement from Guide to the Scriptures on page 33 in chapter 8 of this manual), consider dividing your class into two groups. Have one group search Mosiah 18:8–10 and Doctrine and Covenants 20:37, 77 and identify the conditions God has established for those



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who are baptized. Have the other half of the class search Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–39 and identify the conditions God has established for those who receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. After students share their findings, ask:

- Why do you feel it is important that God, rather than men, sets the terms of a covenant? (If students need help, refer them to Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander’s quotation from the student manual under the heading “God determines our covenants with Him” [10.1.2].)

Covenants and Ordinances of Salvation Are Necessary for Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom

Begin this portion of the lesson by asking:

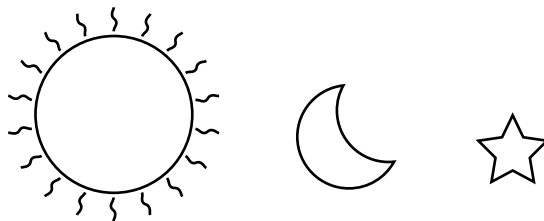
- What are some ordinances that are performed in the Church?

To help students understand the significance of ordinances in the Church, ask them to imagine that instead of baptizing new converts by immersion in water, they were just asked to make a silent promise in their own minds that they will take upon themselves the name of Christ. Then ask:

- What benefits do you see that come from covenants being entered into by participating in associated ordinances? (Possible answers include: Physical reminders of our covenants help establish the sacred nature of covenants; symbolism in the ordinance teaches important principles.)

Tell students that baptism has been referred to as the gate to eternal life (see 2 Nephi 31:17–18). Individuals who are baptized by proper authority are on the path leading toward celestial glory if they keep their covenants and continue to receive other covenants and ordinances required for exaltation. Ask students to review Elder Neuenschwander’s statement in the student manual under the heading “Eternal covenants have an accompanying ordinance” (10.2.3). Invite a few students to summarize in their own words the truths taught by Elder Neuenschwander. Emphasize that when we participate in ordinances and make covenants with the Lord, we are following an eternal pattern that will lead us back to His presence.

Draw illustrations on the board depicting the sun, the moon, and a star. Circle the sun, and write “Celestial kingdom” under it. Have a student read 1 Corinthians 15:40–42. (*Note: The Joseph Smith Translation, footnote 40a reads, “Also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial, and bodies telestial; but the glory of the celestial, one; and the terrestrial, another; and the telestial, another.”*)



- What was Paul teaching in this analogy about the degrees of glory after the Resurrection?

Divide the class into two groups. Assign one group to study Doctrine and Covenants 88:21–25; assign the other group to study Doctrine and Covenants 88:36–39. Ask students to look for how the degree of glory we qualify for will be determined. Have someone from each group summarize what they learned

from the assigned scripture passages. To further reinforce the role of obedience in determining to which kingdom of glory we will be assigned, you might read and discuss Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21 with your class.

Invite students to quietly study John 3:5; 2 Nephi 31:17–18; and Doctrine and Covenants 76:50–52; 130:1–2. As they study, have them look for what the Lord says is required to be exalted in His kingdom.

- According to these scriptures, what are some requirements to be exalted in the celestial kingdom?
- How do these scriptures apply to those who did not have the opportunity to be taught the gospel of Jesus Christ in this life?

After students give answers, share the following quotation with your class:

“The celestial kingdom is the highest of the three kingdoms of glory. Those in this kingdom will dwell forever in the presence of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. This should be your goal: to inherit celestial glory and to help others receive that great blessing as well. Such a goal is not achieved in one attempt; it is the result of a lifetime of righteousness and constancy of purpose” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 92).

Give students a minute or two to ponder how they might use the covenants they have entered into thus far with the Lord to help them in their journey back to Heavenly Father. Assure students that as they make and keep sacred covenants they are on the path back to Heavenly Father.

In the Temple, We Participate in Sacred Ordinances and Make Covenants Essential for Exaltation

Display a picture of a temple.

- What feelings do you have when you see or visit the temple?

Have students read Doctrine and Covenants 124:26–28 regarding the materials for building a temple. Ask students to explain why temples are constructed of the best materials possible.

- In what ways do you think temples symbolize the celestial kingdom?
- How do you think temples symbolize our potential as children of God? (We can become peaceful and develop beautiful characteristics; we can qualify for glorious and beautiful celestial bodies in the Resurrection.)

Remind your students that temple ordinances and covenants are sacred. With that in mind, have students read Doctrine and Covenants 124:33, 37–40 and list on the board ordinances that are performed in the temple. Then turn to the student manual under the heading “Ordinances are essential for the dead” (10.3.2) and read together as a class about each of the ordinances students may participate in at the temple. Add a summary statement on the board next to each ordinance listed. (*Important note:* Because of the sacred nature of temple ordinances, limit class discussion to the material in the student manual. It is not appropriate to discuss these ordinances in detail outside of the temple.) You might consider having students share feelings they have experienced as they have attended the temple.



Conclude this portion of the lesson by having students quietly read and ponder the quotations by President Boyd K. Packer and Elder Russell M. Nelson found in the student manual introduction to chapter 10. Invite students to share any feelings or insights they may have as they ponder these statements. Share your testimony of the crucial nature of temple covenants and your gratitude to the Lord for making them available to us today.

Ordinances for Deceased Ancestors Can Only Be Performed in Temples

Ask if any student can relate the information from the student manual on how baptisms for the dead began in our dispensation. (If not, turn to the student manual and have a student read the information under the heading “Baptism for the dead was restored in the latter days” [10.4.1].) Be sure to emphasize that since that time, work for the dead has only been able to be performed in temples (see D&C 124:29–33). Explain that when you go to the temple for the first time, you go to receive your own endowment. Thereafter, except for your own sealing, each time you perform a temple ordinance it is done vicariously for someone in the spirit world.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 132:8 with your class, and ask:

- How does this scripture contribute to an understanding of why saving ordinances for the dead can only be performed in temples?

We Are Blessed through Temple Worship

Invite any returned missionaries or students who have been married in the temple to share some of the blessings they have received from temple attendance, or that they have heard other family members or friends share with them.

Have students review the material from the student manual under the heading “We Are Blessed through Temple Worship” (10.5). Ask them to select two or three of the blessings mentioned that they most desire for themselves at this time in their lives. After giving time to review, invite students to share what they selected and why.

Share your feelings and testimony about temple blessings. Encourage students to live worthy of a temple recommend and to worship in the temple as regularly as circumstances permit so they might enjoy these blessings in their lives.

Research in Family History

Introduction

Encouraging students to improve their research methods and persevere in searching for their distant ancestors can result in exciting achievements. President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught:

“We can have exciting experiences as we learn about our vibrant, dynamic ancestors. They were very real, living people with problems, hopes, and dreams like we have today. . . .

“It is a joy to become acquainted with our forebears who died long ago. Each of us has a fascinating family history” (“The Phenomenon That Is You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 53).

As students realize that organizing their research efforts is a key to identifying their ancestors and providing the vicarious ordinances for them in the temples, they will be encouraged to persist when it becomes difficult to locate records. Teach them that although they can expect challenges and difficulties in this important work, there are ways to meet those challenges and work through them. Researching leads to real people and the opportunity to extend the ordinances of salvation to them and their families.

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- Family history work becomes more challenging as you research generations further removed from your own.
- An organized research method will help make your efforts more effective.
- There are many types of useful records to search in family history work.
- Have a system for tracking your progress and storing family history documents.

Suggestions for Teaching

Family History Work Becomes More Challenging as You Research Generations Further Removed from Your Own

Ask students to raise their hands if they have ever played a musical instrument. Ask what instrument they played. Then ask how many of them faced a time when it became difficult to keep practicing the instrument.

Invite two or three students to describe what they did to get through the difficult times playing their instrument and what the rewards were for persistence. Suggest to students that just as learning to play a musical instrument is a skill, they are developing a skill as they learn to do family history work.

- When do you think it might become difficult to continue your family history research? (When you come to the end of an ancestral line; when you have incomplete or conflicting information; when you have other pressures that

Note to teacher: Because of the length and amount of material in this lesson, it is suggested that you take two class periods to teach this lesson.

demand much of your time; when you've searched several records without finding the information you need.)

- What would you advise others to do if they become discouraged or encounter a difficult challenge in continuing their family history work?

Have students open their student manuals, and ask a student to read aloud the counsel provided by President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency under the heading "Persist despite the challenges" (11.1.1). Whom did President Eyring ask us to remember when the work becomes more difficult?

- What do you think is meant by the last sentence in his statement, "You will have more than your own strength as you choose to labor on to find them"?

Have students turn to 1 Thessalonians 1:3. Invite them to read this scripture silently and look for words, phrases, and ideas that can be applied to family history work, particularly when it becomes difficult or challenging. After students have read and pondered this verse, encourage them to share their thoughts on how specific words or phrases in the verse may be applied to family history work. Students need not give all of the following answers, but some of their answers could include:

"Without ceasing." Family history is an activity we can be engaged in throughout our lives. We should not stop working when we encounter difficulty.

"Work of faith." Family history requires effort and work on our part. It takes faith to engage in and continue with the work of family history research and submission of names for temple ordinances. Our faith can be increased as we continue participating in the work of the Lord.

"Labour of love." Family history work shows our love for the Lord, for our living families, and for our ancestors. The Atonement of the Lord was a labor of love. The love we show when we do family history work can be felt on both sides of the veil—in mortal life and in the spirit world.

"Patience." It requires patience to continue when the work becomes difficult. It may take a long time to locate records of a distant ancestor.

"Patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." We hope by our diligent efforts in family history that we will be rewarded with success. Our hope is connected with our faith in the Lord's work on the other side of the veil. Not knowing whether or not the work is accepted by our ancestors requires patience and hope on our part.

"In the sight of God and our Father." Our family history work is pleasing to both Jesus Christ and our Father in Heaven. They know and appreciate the efforts we are putting into family history.

Divide the class into five groups (or fewer if the class is small). Assign each group one of the following scripture references, and give them about five minutes to work as a group.

- Luke 15:8–10
- Romans 5:3–5
- James 1:3–5
- D&C 100:2–4
- D&C 127:4

Explain that they will do the same thing within their groups using their assigned scriptures that they did as a class using 1 Thessalonians 1:3. Have them look for words, phrases, and ideas from their scripture references that can be applied to family history when the work becomes difficult. Students should discuss their answers within their own groups.

After the group work, have students select a spokesperson for each group to briefly summarize their scriptures and the ideas they discussed.

Read the following statement from President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency to your class:



“Patience means active waiting and enduring. It means staying with something and doing all that we can—working, hoping, and exercising faith; bearing hardship with fortitude, even when the desires of our hearts are delayed. Patience is not simply enduring; it is enduring well” (“Continue in Patience,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 57).

- When in the past have you been blessed by the Lord because of your patience? How does that experience lead you to believe the Lord will do the same as you labor in patience to research your ancestors?

An Organized Research Method Will Help Make Your Efforts More Effective

Divide the class again into small groups (different groups than before). Invite students to create a list titled “Steps for successful family history research.” Ask them to determine five or six basic steps that could help family history students organize and direct their research efforts. Ask them to write down the steps they would recommend and then prioritize the list from the first step to the last.

After sufficient time, have the groups pair up and compare their lists. Follow up the group discussions by asking the class the following questions:

- How did your steps compare with the steps from other groups?
- What advantages do you see in writing a step-by-step process for conducting research?

Give students some time to refer to the material in the student manual under the heading “Develop a system for family history research” (11.2.1). Ask them to compare the suggestions in the student manual and make any adjustments in their own lists that they think might improve them for their individual use.

- From our discussions today, what do you think you could do differently to make your research more effective?

Challenge students to apply this exercise to their own family history research efforts by writing specific goals for each step and using names from their own ancestry and then following through with their plans.

Note to teacher: Students will benefit from your advanced preparation in this area. Try to obtain and show students as many different types of documents as you can from the list found in the student manual under the heading “There are many sources to search for family history information” (11.3.2).

The demonstration described here could take an entire class period or more, which may be appropriate to do. Adapt the time spent on the demonstration to the needs of the students according to the classroom facilities available.

Note to teacher: In preparation for lesson 12 on “Finding and Creating Personal and Family Histories,” consider asking students to bring examples to the next class of what they or their families have done to record or preserve personal or family records. Examples might include digital recordings, picture albums or scrapbooks, tablet computer diaries, personal histories or journals, or books of remembrance.

There Are Many Types of Useful Records to Search in Family History Work

Ask how many students have a copy of their birth certificate. Ask if any of them have ever requested a copy of a birth, marriage, or death certificate, and what procedure they followed. You may want to show copies of birth, marriage, or death certificates (or any other family history record) and note the information written on them.

Invite students to suggest other types of records or sources of information that can be of value in family history research, and what information those records contain. As answers are given you might have a student write answers on the board. To help the class learn about other kinds of records, you may want to refer them to the student manual under the heading “There are many sources to search for family history information” (11.3.2). This would be an appropriate time to show examples of many of these records that you gathered and prepared before class.

If you have the facilities to demonstrate on a computer, show the students how to access several types of records and let them see what they contain. You could do this on the Church’s FamilySearch website (FamilySearch.org), Brigham Young University’s family history website (familyhistorylab.byu.edu), or any other family history site you are familiar with.

Have a System for Tracking Your Progress and Storing Family History Documents

- Hold up a stack of papers and tell students, “Imagine that this is my carefully organized family history work for the past two years.” Drop the stack so that it hits the corner of a table or desk and scatters on the floor. What lessons can be learned from this demonstration that can be applied to family history work?

President Brigham Young (1801–77) once made the following statement:



“Never displace anything, but always put everything in its place”
(*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 181).

- How can this counsel be applied to family history work?
- What advantages can a computer program (such as FamilySearch) add to record storage and retrieval?

Invite students to share what they are doing to keep track of their progress in family history work. Also ask them if they know someone who has a successful plan for organizing their family history work and to describe that plan.

Close by sharing President Faust’s statement in the introduction of this chapter. Testify that the work of family history research leads to personal and eternal rewards in the kingdom of heaven.

Finding and Creating Personal and Family Histories

12

Introduction

In one sense, the scriptures can be viewed as a collection of personal and family history records of the prophets. They contain accounts of individual and family achievements, failures, struggles through trials, personal testing, and the development of faith and testimony in the Lord's work. They bless us with their testimony of the effects of the gospel on individuals and societies: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

Like the scriptures, the records written and collected by your students can have a positive impact on their own

family members and descendants, giving them hope, courage, and the ability to develop stronger faith in God.

In this lesson students will explore the value of personal and family history records. They will be encouraged to gather and create records that reveal their life for future family members, a life that can build gratitude and faith in the Lord. Students will be given an opportunity to ponder some of the events of their own lives that could be inspiring to their descendants.

Some Doctrines, Principles, and Gospel Truths

- We can be inspired by reading the personal histories of our ancestors.
- Personal and family histories have value for us and our descendants.
- Leave a record of your life that reflects your faith in God and testimony of His influence in your life to inspire faith in others.
- Use modern technology to compile, display, and share personal and family records.

Suggestions for Teaching

We Can Be Inspired by Reading the Personal Histories of Our Ancestors

If available, show the video "The Joseph Millett Story" (6:40), found on disc 2 of the *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Visual Resource DVDs*. If the DVD is not available to you, ask a student to read the account of Joseph Millett from the student manual under the heading "The Lord knew Joseph Millett" (12.1.4). Ask students to imagine that they are direct descendants of Joseph Millett and that they are about to hear for the first time something that he wrote.

- What do you think Joseph Millett's descendants might gain from this account?
- From this example, how would you describe the potential value of personal stories from the lives of your ancestors?



Point out to students that sometimes we may come across family stories that are less than flattering; perhaps one of our ancestors was guilty of a horrible crime. Ask the class:

- How might finding embarrassing stories about our ancestors be a valuable experience for us?

Divide the class into two groups. Assign one group to review Enos 1:2–8 and the other Helaman 5:42–49. Have them review the chapter summaries to become familiar with the setting for the event in their assigned scriptures. Give them a few minutes to come up with a list of lessons or main ideas they can learn from the accounts. (A student in each group could write the list.) To conclude this exercise, allow time for students from each group to briefly summarize the story and share the lessons or ideas on their group list. (Possible answers include: I can pray in any circumstance; my prayers can be answered by thoughts coming to my mind; the Lord speaks to individuals in answer to their prayers; the Lord can protect His servants; the Spirit of the Lord can have a profound effect on others; peace is a gift of the Spirit; angels minister to men and women; and so on.)

Ask students if they can remember an inspiring or uplifting story from the life of one of their family members or a deceased ancestor (such as a grandparent). Invite two or three students to share their story with the class and explain how that story affects them.

- Where can we go to locate such stories? (Family members, friends of family, Church History Library, local Church history archives, and so on.)

Encourage students to begin assembling their own collection of these types of stories and materials.

Personal and Family Histories Have Value for Us and Our Descendants

Have a student read Moses 6:5–6. Ask the class:

- Why do you think that from the days of Adam we have been commanded to keep records?

After a few responses, invite students to read Mosiah 1:4–5, looking for what King Benjamin taught as an important reason for keeping records.

- What reason did King Benjamin give for keeping accurate records about our dealings with the Lord?

Invite students to read the student manual under the heading “Journals and family histories have value” (12.2.3), looking for additional reasons to keep a personal journal or history. After a few minutes, ask the following questions:

Note to teacher: Consider writing these questions on the board while students are reading in the student manual.

Of the reasons you read about, which one holds the greatest meaning to you? Why does that one stand out to you?

What experiences have you had that have taught the truthfulness of what we just read in the student manual?

After discussing the questions on the board, have students form pairs with another member of the class. Invite them to imagine that they are going to travel back in time to visit one of their ancestors. (Encourage them to think of an ancestor by name.) Ask them to make a list of questions they would like to ask their ancestor. After sufficient time to work on the activity, invite students to share with the class several questions from their list. Suggest that our own descendants may one day

have the same kinds of questions for us, and the way to preserve the answers is to record them now. Give students a few moments to ponder the following questions and to write down responses to remember:

- What records have you created so far, and how will they be preserved?

Ask class members what counsel they would give to someone who said, “There’s nothing interesting in my life worth writing about”? (Encourage several answers.) If you feel students would benefit from doing so, have a student read from the student manual under the heading “Protection by divine intervention” (12.2.5). Ask students the following questions:

- In what ways do you think that Brother Ottosen’s descendants would benefit from knowing about this experience?
- What is something you have learned about a parent or ancestor that might have seemed small to the ancestor but was meaningful to you or helped you understand, love, respect, or appreciate your parent or ancestor more?

Emphasize that adults who may not marry and have children of their own can still create their individual histories for the descendants of their brothers, sisters, cousins, and others.

Leave a Record of Your Life That Reflects Your Faith in God and Testimony of His Influence in Your Life to Inspire Faith in Others

Give students several minutes to quietly study 2 Nephi 25:23, 26 and Jacob 1:2–4; 4:2–4 and to ponder how they might apply what is taught in these scriptures to their own personal histories. Many of the student responses will likely include the phrases listed below. As students identify these phrases and discuss them, you might write them on the board:

2 Nephi 25:23, 26; Jacob 1:2–4; 4:2–4

“We labor diligently to write, to persuade our children . . . to believe in Christ” (2 Nephi 25:23).

“We write . . . that our children may know” (2 Nephi 25:26).

“I should write . . . a few of the things which I considered to be most precious” (Jacob 1:2).

“We write . . . [that] which will give our children . . . a small degree of knowledge concerning us” (Jacob 4:2). “That they may know that we knew of Christ” (Jacob 4:4).

Ask students:

- What do these phrases mean to you?

Discuss the meaning and application of these phrases with your students. Suggest that students mark these phrases in their scriptures.

Ask students to select one of these phrases and describe how they might follow this pattern in their personal journal writing. Have them select another phrase and describe some examples of things they might write about that would have positive results.

Ask students if there are specific experiences from their own lives that they would like to record that would be valuable to leave for their descendants. For example,

such an experience could involve an answered prayer, a priesthood blessing, or an inspired act of service from someone. Give them some time to ponder. Ask them to write down general descriptions of personal experiences they would like their descendants to know about. After sufficient time, encourage them to select one or more of their experiences to write about later.

Ask if one or two students would like to share with the class an experience they thought of from their own life. If you have one or more students who are keeping a regular journal, you might ask a few of them to share a few experiences they have had keeping a journal—experiences such as when they started keeping a journal, why they began, and how it has been a blessing in their lives.

Have students read the statement by President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency from the student manual under the heading “Record the blessings you receive from the Lord” (12.3.1). Ask students to think about the past week and briefly write down several ways the Lord blessed them. Students might also be encouraged to think about some negative experiences or some of life’s hard lessons they have learned. How might their posterity grow from reading some of these experiences? After allowing sufficient time for students to ponder and write, share your testimony regarding the value of family history records and emphasize the importance of students’ sharing their own testimonies in the records they leave of their lives.

Use Modern Technology to Compile, Display, and Share Personal and Family Records

Invite students to discuss how recent technological advancements have changed the way they communicate with others. They might even demonstrate something they have at hand (such as a mobile phone or other handheld device).

- How can technology affect the way we compile and preserve family or personal records? (Invite students to list as many ways as they can think of to create family history records using current technology. Summarize their list on the board.)
- What are some technologies or media formats you or family members have used to compile or display family history information?
- What records do you currently have in your possession that you would like to use modern technology to preserve and display for others to see?

If at the end of the previous lesson you made an assignment for students to bring examples of what they or their family members have done to record and preserve family records, this would be an ideal time to have students display and talk about what they have done. Examples might include digital recordings, picture albums or scrapbooks, tablet computer diaries, personal histories or journals, and books of remembrance. If students were not asked to bring examples, you might bring examples of your own to discuss. As each item is discussed, consider asking questions like:

- Where are these items kept in your home? What impact have they had on members of your family?
- How could modern technology be used to increase or improve the longevity of this item?
- What have you seen or heard about that you would like to do with your own records? What are you going to do in order to begin preserving more of your personal history?

As you conclude this lesson, and perhaps this course of study, invite students to reflect on what they have learned over the course of the semester. Invite several of your students to share with the class how this course has altered their feelings for deceased ancestors and deepened their love for the Lord and His gospel. Share your testimony of the great work of redeeming the dead. Encourage students to set goals that might give them direction for further efforts in this work.



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