

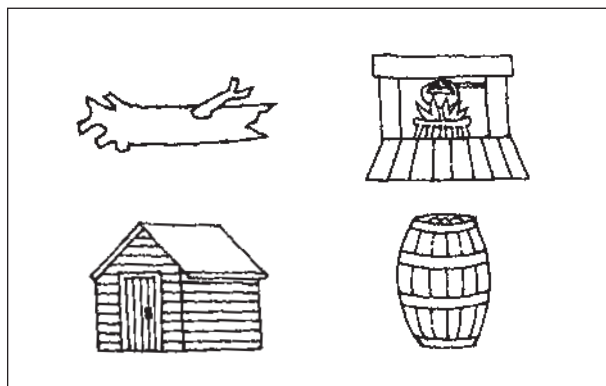
Joseph Smith Receives the Gold Plates

Purpose

To help the children understand that when we are obedient and do our part, Heavenly Father will help us.

Preparation

1. Prayerfully study Joseph Smith—History 1:59–65, Isaiah 29:11–12 (prophecy concerning Martin Harris’s visit to Professor Anthon), and the historical account given in this lesson. Then study the lesson and decide how you want to teach the children the scriptural and historical accounts. (See “Preparing Your Lessons,” pp. vi–vii, and “Teaching the Scriptural and Historical Accounts,” pp. vii–ix.)
2. Additional reading: 2 Nephi 27:15–20.
3. Select the discussion questions and enrichment activities that will involve the children and best help them achieve the purpose of the lesson.
4. Copy the following illustrations onto a piece of paper or the chalkboard:



5. Materials needed:
 - a. A Pearl of Great Price for each child.
 - b. A Bible and a Book of Mormon.
 - c. Map of the New York–Ohio Area, found at the end of lesson 1.
 - d. Picture 5-11, Joseph Smith Receives the Gold Plates (Gospel Art Picture Kit 406; 62012); picture 5-12, Joseph Smith Brings the Gold Plates to the Carriage; picture 5-13, The Gold Plates.
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Suggested Lesson Development

Invite a child to give the opening prayer.

Attention Activity

Display the illustrations of the fallen tree, fireplace, workshop, and barrel of beans.

- What do these objects have in common?

Scriptural
and Historical
Accounts

After the children have offered their ideas, explain that each of these was used by Joseph Smith to hide the gold plates to keep them safe. Ask the children to listen to the lesson to find out how Joseph used each of these locations.

Teach the children about Joseph Smith receiving the gold plates, Moroni's counsel to Joseph concerning the safety of the gold plates, and Joseph's efforts to protect the plates, as described in Joseph Smith—History 1:59–61 and the following historical account. Use the pictures and the map at appropriate times.

When the time had come for Joseph Smith to receive the gold plates, he borrowed a horse and wagon and went with his wife, Emma, to the Hill Cumorah, where the plates were buried. Joseph left Emma with the wagon at the bottom of the hill and climbed the hill alone to meet the angel Moroni. Moroni gave Joseph the gold plates. He also gave Joseph the Urim and Thummim and a breastplate, tools to help with the translation of the gold plates.

Moroni warned Joseph that evil men would be watching for a chance to steal the plates and told Joseph that he must do everything in his power to keep them safe (see JS—H 1:59). Joseph found that as soon as people knew that he had the plates, they tried to take them away (see JS—H 1:60). He had to hide the plates in many places to keep them safe.

After Joseph and Emma left the hill where the plates had been buried, Joseph stopped and took the plates into the woods. There he found a large fallen tree that was soft and decayed inside. He cut back the bark of the tree, dug out a hole, and hid the plates inside, covering them up again with the tree bark.

A few days later, while Joseph was working several miles away from Palmyra, his family learned that some men were coming to search for the gold plates. Emma immediately got a horse and rode to warn Joseph about the men. Joseph had also been warned through the Urim and Thummim that the plates were in danger. Joseph returned to Palmyra and took the plates from the tree, wrapped them in a linen cloth, and started for home with them. He thought it would be safer to travel through the woods rather than on the road, but in the woods someone hit him from behind with a gun. Joseph knocked down the man who attacked him and ran away as fast as he could. He was attacked twice more, but was able to escape each time and bring the plates safely to his home.

On another occasion, Joseph learned that a mob was coming to look for the plates. He pulled up some stones in front of the fireplace and hid the plates underneath. As soon as the stones were put back into place, a group of men came up to the house. Joseph and his father and brothers ran out the front door yelling. The mob thought that there were many men helping Joseph and ran away frightened.

A few days later Joseph was inspired to take the plates, along with the wooden box in which he kept them, from under the fireplace stones. He carried the bundle across the street to a workshop on the Smith farm. He took the gold plates out of the box, wrapped them in cloth, and hid them in the loft of the shop. Then he pulled up some floorboards, hid the empty wooden box under the boards, and nailed the boards back down. When night came, a mob came and hunted for the plates. The mob pulled up the floorboards and found the empty wooden box, but the gold plates remained safe where Joseph had hidden them in the loft.

Because of all the persecution and the people trying to steal the gold plates, Joseph knew that he would not be able to work on their translation in Palmyra. Joseph and Emma decided to move to Harmony, Pennsylvania, where Emma's parents lived. Joseph was worried about how to get the gold plates safely to Harmony. He put the plates in a box and put the box at the bottom of a barrel. Joseph then filled the barrel with beans and nailed down the lid. With the barrel and their other belongings in a wagon, Joseph and Emma set off for Harmony. Although they were stopped along the way and their wagon was searched by people looking for the plates, the plates were not found.

Because Joseph did his best to protect the plates as he had been commanded, Heavenly Father helped him keep the plates safe and also sent help in other ways. Part of this help came from a successful farmer named Martin Harris, an old friend of the Smith family. When Joseph and Emma were preparing to move to Harmony, Martin Harris came to Joseph and said, "Here, Mr. Smith, is fifty dollars; I give this to you to do the Lord's work with; no, I give it to the Lord for his own work" (quoted in Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 118). With this money Joseph and Emma were able to move to Harmony to continue the Lord's work in bringing forth the Book of Mormon.

Martin Harris continued to help Joseph Smith in a number of ways. After Joseph and Emma moved to Harmony, Martin visited Joseph there. Joseph had copied many of the characters from the gold plates and translated some of them. Martin took the characters and their translation to Charles Anthon, a professor of languages in New York City, and later to a Dr. Mitchell.

Teach the children about Martin Harris's experiences with Professor Anthon and Dr. Mitchell, as recorded in Joseph Smith—History 1:62–65. Help the children understand that these events fulfilled a prophecy made by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 29:11–12; see also 2 Nephi 27:15–20) thousands of years before Joseph Smith's time.

Discussion and Application Questions

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

- How many years passed between the angel Moroni's first visit and when Joseph Smith received the gold plates? (JS—H 1:53.) Why did Joseph have to wait so long to receive the plates?
- What responsibility did the angel Moroni give Joseph Smith concerning the gold plates? (JS—H 1:59.) What warning and promise did Moroni give Joseph?
- What happened as soon as it was known that Joseph Smith had the gold plates? (JS—H 1:60.) Why do you think people wanted to try to get the gold plates away from Joseph? (The gold plates were worth a lot of money; Satan did not want the plates to be translated.) Point out that although these people did not believe Joseph was a prophet, they did believe he had the gold plates. Why do you think people believed Joseph had the gold plates even though they did not believe he was a prophet?
- What did Joseph Smith do to keep the plates safe? How did Joseph know when and where to move the gold plates to keep them safe? Help the children understand that Heavenly Father helped Joseph know when the plates were in danger. Point out that Joseph did his part and was obedient to Moroni's warning.

- When we have problems or difficulties, how can we receive Heavenly Father's help in solving them? Share a personal experience when you asked for and received help from Heavenly Father. Invite the children to talk about times when Heavenly Father has helped them with their problems.
- What did Professor Anthon say when Martin Harris first showed him a copy of some of the Book of Mormon writings? (JS—H 1:64.) Why do you think Professor Anthon tore up the certificate when he learned that an angel had shown Joseph Smith where to find the gold plates? (JS—H 1:65.)
- How do you think Martin Harris's experiences with Charles Anthon and Dr. Mitchell helped strengthen his testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet? How can reading about these experiences help strengthen our testimonies? (See Isaiah 29:11–12.)

Enrichment Activities

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

1. Before class, write the following situations or others appropriate for the children in your class on separate pieces of paper:

- You are going to have a test at school.
- You have been asked to give a talk in Primary.
- You are going to play in a sports event.
- You have just moved to a new area and you want to make new friends.
- You have had a quarrel with a friend.
- You sometimes fight with a brother or sister.
- You are going to perform in a program or recital.
- You want to play with a friend but your parents need you to help at home.

Discuss with the children how Heavenly Father will help us with our problems and difficulties when we do our part. Write the following on the chalkboard:

Pray about the problem or difficulty.
Live worthily and follow the promptings of the Spirit.
Do all you can to solve the problem.

Have each child choose a paper and read it to the class. Discuss how the children might solve the problem or difficulty using the steps written on the chalkboard.

2. Briefly review how the Lord told Nephi to go back to Jerusalem to get the brass plates from Laban, and discuss the efforts that Nephi made to get the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 3–5). Emphasize that because Nephi was obedient and did his part, the Lord helped him accomplish what he needed

to do. Have a child read 1 Nephi 3:7 aloud, and help the children memorize the first part of what Nephi told his father: “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded.”

3. Ask the children to name people who help them each day. List these people on the chalkboard. Help the children understand that Heavenly Father can give us help in the form of friends. Review how the Lord inspired Martin Harris to help Joseph Smith when Joseph needed help. Discuss how important it is to be a friend and to help others in need when possible. Ask the children to share an experience when they needed help and help came in the form of a friend, or an experience when they were able to help a friend.
4. Teach the children about the Urim and Thummim:

The Urim and Thummim is a sacred tool given by God to help prophets receive revelations from the Lord and translate languages (see Bible Dictionary, “Urim and Thummim”).

Joseph Smith described the Urim and Thummim as “two stones in silver bows . . . fastened to a breastplate” (JS—H 1:35). The Prophet stated that when he was humble and prayerful, he could look into these stones and read the strange language on the gold plates. He could also look into these stones and get Heavenly Father’s word about certain things he ought to know and do.

Help the children find and discuss the following scriptures that refer to the Urim and Thummim:

Exodus 28:30

Mosiah 28:11, 13

Ether 3:23–24, 4:4–5

Doctrine and Covenants 17:1

5. Write the following statements on separate pieces of paper:
 - Each gold plate was six inches wide and eight inches long.
 - Joseph Smith described each plate as “not quite so thick as common tin.”
 - Three rings bound the book of plates together.
 - The whole book was about six inches thick.
 - The plates had small characters engraved on them.
 - A portion of the book was sealed and could not be translated.
 - Joseph Smith was told that the sealed part would be translated at a future time.

Give each piece of paper to a child, and have the children read the statements out loud to help the class members understand what the gold plates were like (see *History of the Church*, 4:537).

Conclusion

Testimony	Bear your testimony that Heavenly Father loves each of us and will help us as we are obedient and do our part. Express your appreciation for the example and diligence of Joseph Smith as he faced many problems and challenges in protecting the gold plates.
Suggested Home Reading	Suggest that the children study Joseph Smith—History 1:59–60 at home as a review of this lesson.
Suggested Family Sharing	Encourage the children to share with their families a specific part of the lesson, such as a story, question, or activity, or to read with their families the “Suggested Home Reading.” Invite a child to give the closing prayer.