



Introduction

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have established the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* series to help you deepen your understanding of the restored gospel and draw closer to the Lord through the teachings of latter-day Presidents of the Church. As the Church adds volumes to this series, you will build a collection of gospel reference books for your home. The volumes in this series are designed to be used both for personal study and for quorum and class instruction.

This book features the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was called of God to open the dispensation of the fulness of times in these latter days. Between his vision of the Father and the Son in the spring of 1820 and his martyrdom in June 1844, he established The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and brought forth the fulness of the gospel, never again to be taken from the earth.

Personal Study

As you study the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, seek the inspiration of the Spirit. Remember Nephi's promise: "He that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 10:19). Begin your study with prayer, and continue to pray and ponder in your heart as you read.

At the end of each chapter, you will find questions and scripture references that will help you understand and apply Joseph Smith's teachings. Consider reviewing them before you read the chapter.

Also consider the following suggestions:

- Look for key words and phrases. If you find a word you do not understand, use a dictionary or another source to better understand its meaning. Write a note in the margin to help you remember what you have learned about the word.

- Think about the meaning of Joseph Smith’s teachings. You may want to mark phrases and sentences that teach particular gospel principles or touch your mind and heart, or you may want to write your thoughts and feelings in the margins.
- Reflect on experiences you have had that relate to the Prophet’s teachings.
- Ponder how Joseph Smith’s teachings apply to you. Think about how the teachings relate to concerns or questions you have. Decide what you will do as a result of what you have learned.

Teaching from This Book

This book can be used to teach at home or at church. The following suggestions will help you.

Focus on Joseph Smith’s Words and the Scriptures

The Lord has commanded that we teach “none other things than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught [us] by the Comforter through the prayer of faith” (D&C 52:9). He also declared that “the elders, priests and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gospel” (D&C 42:12).

Your assignment is to help others understand the Prophet Joseph Smith’s teachings and the scriptures. Do not set this book aside or prepare lessons from other materials. Dedicate a significant portion of the lesson to reading Joseph Smith’s teachings in this book and discussing their meaning and application.

Encourage participants to bring this book to church so that they will be better prepared to participate in class discussions.

Seek the Guidance of the Holy Ghost

As you pray for help and prepare diligently, the Holy Ghost will guide your efforts. He will help you emphasize the portions of each chapter that will encourage others to understand and apply the gospel.

When you teach, pray in your heart that the power of the Spirit will accompany your words and the class discussions. Nephi said, “When a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1; see also D&C 50:13–22).

Prepare to Teach

The chapters in this book have been organized to help you prepare to teach. The “From the Life of Joseph Smith” section in each chapter provides information about Joseph Smith’s life and early Church history that can be used in introducing and teaching the lesson. The “Teachings of Joseph Smith” section is divided into several subsections, with headings that summarize the main points in the chapter. These headings can serve as an outline from which you can teach. The final section, “Suggestions for Study and Teaching,” provides questions and scriptures that relate to the teachings.

You will be more effective in your teaching when you do the following:

1. *Study the chapter.* Read the chapter to become confident in your understanding of Joseph Smith’s teachings. You will teach with greater sincerity and power when his words have influenced you personally (see D&C 11:21). As you read, keep in mind the needs of those you teach. You may want to mark doctrines and principles in the chapter that you feel will help them.
2. *Decide which portions to use.* Each chapter contains more than you will be able to teach in one lesson. Rather than try to cover the entire chapter, prayerfully select doctrines and principles that you feel will be most helpful for those you teach. For example, you could choose to focus on one or two subsections and a few questions that will help the participants discuss the principles in the sections you have chosen.
3. *Decide how to introduce the lesson.* To spark interest at the beginning of the lesson, you might share a personal experience or ask participants to read a story from the beginning of the chapter or look at a picture in the chapter. Then you could

ask, “What does this story (or picture) teach about the main topic of the chapter?” Other options for beginning a lesson include reading a scripture or a quotation from the chapter or singing a hymn. Another helpful idea is to let participants know what the main points of the lesson will be. You may also want to remind participants of the previous lesson from this book by asking them to recall events, people, principles, or doctrines that were discussed.

4. *Decide how to encourage discussion.* This is where you should spend most of the lesson time because participants learn doctrines and principles best when they participate in the discussion of them. Review the suggestions for conducting edifying discussions on pages xi–xii of this book. You might use questions from “Suggestions for Study and Teaching” at the end of the chapter. You might also prepare some of your own questions using the following suggestions:

- Ask questions that help participants look for facts, events, doctrines, and principles. These types of questions help participants focus on specific truths you wish to emphasize and become familiar with specific information in the Prophet’s teachings. For example, after identifying a specific quotation, you could ask, “What are some of the key words or phrases in this quotation?” or “What is the topic of this quotation?”
- Ask questions that help participants think about the doctrines and principles that Joseph Smith taught. These types of questions encourage participants to examine and share their thoughts and feelings about Joseph Smith’s teachings. For example, “Why do you think this teaching is important?” or “What thoughts or feelings do you have about this quotation?” or “What does this teaching mean to you?”
- Ask questions that encourage participants to compare what they learn from the Prophet’s teachings to their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences. For example, “What experiences have you had that relate to what the Prophet Joseph Smith said?”

- Ask questions that help participants apply what is being taught to their own lives. These questions help participants think about ways they can live according to Joseph Smith’s teachings. For example, “What is Joseph Smith encouraging us to do? In what ways can we apply what he said?” Remind participants that they will learn not only from what is said, but also from revelation directly to them (see D&C 121:26).
5. *Decide how to conclude the lesson.* You may choose to quickly summarize the lesson or ask one or two participants to do so. As prompted by the Spirit, testify of the teachings you have discussed. You may also want to invite others to share their testimonies. Encourage those you teach to follow the promptings they have received from the Holy Ghost.

As you prepare to teach, you may want to look for ideas in *Teaching, No Greater Call* (36123), part B, chapters 14, 16, 28, and 29; or in the *Teaching Guidebook* (34595).

Conduct Edifying Discussions

The following suggestions will help you encourage and conduct edifying discussions:

- Seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost. He may prompt you to ask certain questions or to include certain people in the discussion.
- Help participants focus on Joseph Smith’s teachings. Have them read his words to generate discussion and to answer questions. If the discussion begins to stray from the topic or becomes speculative or contentious, redirect the discussion by referring back to an event, doctrine, or principle in the chapter.
- As appropriate, share experiences that relate to the teachings in the chapter.
- Encourage participants to share their thoughts, ask questions, and teach one another (see D&C 88:122). For example, you could ask them to comment on what others have said, or you could direct one question to several participants.
- Do not be afraid of silence after you ask a question. Often those you teach need time to think or to look in their books before they share ideas, testimonies, and experiences.

- Listen sincerely, and seek to understand everyone's comments. Express gratitude for their participation.
- When participants share several ideas, consider listing the ideas on the chalkboard or asking someone else to do so.
- Look for different ways to include participants in the discussion. For example, you might have them discuss questions in small groups or with the person sitting next to them.
- Consider contacting one or two participants in advance. Ask them to come to class ready to answer one of the questions you have prepared.
- Use a hymn, especially a hymn of the Restoration, to reinforce the discussion of a gospel truth. Singing a hymn is also an effective way to introduce or conclude a lesson.
- Do not end a good discussion just because you want to cover all the material you have prepared. What matters most is that participants feel the influence of the Spirit and grow in their commitment to live the gospel.

Teachings for Our Day

This book deals with teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith that have application to our day. For example, this book does not discuss such topics as the Prophet's teachings regarding the law of consecration as applied to stewardship of property. The Lord withdrew this law from the Church because the Saints were not prepared to live it (see D&C 119, section heading). This book also does not discuss plural marriage. The doctrines and principles relating to plural marriage were revealed to Joseph Smith as early as 1831. The Prophet taught the doctrine of plural marriage, and a number of such marriages were performed during his lifetime. Over the next several decades, under the direction of the Church Presidents who succeeded Joseph Smith, a significant number of Church members entered into plural marriages. In 1890, President Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto, which discontinued plural marriage in the Church (see Official Declaration 1). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints no longer practices plural marriage.

Information about Sources Quoted in This Book

The teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith presented in this book have been taken from several categories of source materials: the Prophet's sermons, articles prepared for publication by the Prophet or under his direction, the Prophet's letters and journals, recorded recollections of those who heard the Prophet speak, and some of the Prophet's teachings and writings that were later canonized in the scriptures. Many of Joseph Smith's teachings have been quoted from the *History of the Church*. For further information about these sources, see the appendix.

A number of unpublished sources are quoted in this work. Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar have been standardized where necessary to improve readability. Paragraph divisions have also been inserted or altered to improve readability. Where the quotations come from published source materials, the sources have been quoted without alteration, unless otherwise noted. All material within square brackets has been added by the editors of this book, unless otherwise noted.